

Poplavsky to speed up the advance to the north and, in cooperation with the Soviet units, defeat the enemy. |

The advanced formations of Bogdanov's tank army, having driven the Germans out of Naugard, on March 5 reached the Oder River in the Kammin area. Belov's rifle divisions advanced up to 65 kilometers, having captured Stargard.

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With the release of the troops of the left wing of the 2nd Belorussian and the right wing of the 1st Belorussian fronts on the coast of the Baltic Sea, the task of dissecting the East Pomeranian group was successfully solved. At the same time, the German 2nd Army, having suffered significant losses, was thrown back to the northeast, and the 3rd Panzer Army was actually defeated.

The defeat in Pomerania shocked the leadership of the Reich, even the clinical optimist Goebbels these days (March 5 and 6) experienced a shock, again and again mentally reliving the mournful events:

"A truly hopeless situation has now arisen for us in Pomerania. Developments there give rise to the most serious fears. Our front is completely broken there, and at the moment it is not clear how we could again take up strong defensive positions here. Many of our best parts in the area are either cut off or surrounded altogether. Of course, we are trying to transfer there from the Berlin front everything that can still be taken from here; but this is again an invitation to Stalin to decide on a strike on Berlin as soon as possible ...

Penetrations or, rather, breakthroughs of the enemy are truly fatal here. Soviet tanks are already near Kolberg. Our positions in Pomerania can be considered completely broken. The enemy managed to connect both of his wedges; between them there are still very large German forces, and the enemy is now trying to create three fatal cauldrons around them. This development has an almost startling effect...

In the evening I was with a report to the Fuhrer. Unlike the last

meeting, I find him somewhat depressed, which is also understandable, given the development of hostilities. Besides, he's a little unwell; I notice with horror that the nervous trembling of this left hand has increased significantly ... "The situation in Pomerania naturally gives rise to the strongest anxiety, although Guderian still believes that as a result of counterattacks he will be able to straighten it out. Looking at Zharta is simply terrifying."

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However, the cautious Stalin did not take advantage of the "invitation", the attack on Berlin again postponed.

In order to finally finish off the adversary and liberate the entire Baltic coast from the Vistula to the Oder, the Headquarters of the All-Russian Command of the Command of March 5 specified the tasks of the fronts.

Now the troops of the 2nd Belorussian Front had to defeat the 2nd army of the enemy, cut off from the rest of the forces and pressed to the sea in the northeastern part of Pomerania, to capture the cities of Danzig, Zopot, Gotenhafen and no later than March 20 to go out in the entire strip to sea. The troops of the 1st Belorussian Front were to liquidate the remnants of the 3rd Panzer Army pressed against the Oder and the Stettin Bay and clear the western part of Eastern Pomerania from the enemy.

Marshal Rokossovsky, without carrying out significant regroupings, continued the offensive by the troops of the right wing along the left bank of the Vistula to Danzig, and by the troops of the left wing - to

towards Lauenburg, Gotenhafen. In the main direction, along the coast of the Baltic Sea, the 19th Army struck, under the command of Lieutenant General V.3. Romanovsky, together with the 3rd Guards Tank Corps. To speed up the "process," at his request, Katukov's tank army and the 1st tank brigade of the Polish Army were temporarily placed under Rokossovsky's command. "On this occasion, G.K. called me on HF. Zhukov: "I warn you. The army must be returned in exactly the same composition as it leaves for you!"

The 3rd Guards Cavalry Corps provided the left flank of the shock group from the west.

On March 6, the front launched an offensive along converging directions on Danzig. Having successfully broken through the enemy's defenses, the troops of his right flank advanced to a depth of 15-18 kilometers, and those of the left flank to a depth of 12 kilometers. The 2nd shock army accepted the surrender of the encircled enemy group in the Graudenz fortress, while the 116th corps broke into the city of Starogard. On March 7, having cleared the Keozlin area of the enemy, the 3rd Guards Tank Corps rushed to Stolp, Lauenburg.

In this situation, the German command began to withdraw

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the main forces in the positions of the Danzig fortified area. Strong rearguards clung to settlements and advantageous frontiers. On March 8 and 9, the troops of the 2nd Belorussian Front, pursuing the enemy, advanced up to 50 kilometers. Panfilov's tankers, together with the infantry of the 19th Army, captured a large junction of railways and highways, the city of Stolp and the port of Stolpmulde. Rokossovsky ordered the commanders of the 8th and 1st Guards Tank Corps to establish close cooperation between themselves and "push" with all their might in order to break into Danzig on the shoulders of the retreating enemy. Accordingly, the 3rd Guards Tank Corps was given the task of rapidly moving east and capturing Gotenhafen. In order not to allow the enemy to gain a foothold on intermediate lines, the Soviet units

attacked day and night.

On March 10, Panfilov's tankers again distinguished themselves: they were the first to cross the Leba River and captured Lauenburg. On the same day, the 1st Guards Tank Army (319 tanks and 136 self-propelled guns) was brought into battle in the zone of the 19th Army, which also crossed the Leba River, then the Brenkenhof Canal and ran into the western outskirts of Neustadt. During the day, the armies of the left wing and the center covered another 15 to 30 kilometers, the troops of the right wing repelled counterattacks at the same line. The enemy, retreating, more and more compacted the battle formations, and

the pace of the offensive of the Soviet troops decreased markedly. On March 12, the 1st Guards Tank, having broken resistance in the Neupgtadt area, reached the coast of the Danzig Bay north of Gotenhafen. By the end of March 13, the troops of the 2nd Belorussian Front came directly to the outer contour of the Danzig fortified area.

Rokossovsky was going to hack it on the move, "without allowing any pauses." The plan was prepared at the adjacent junction of the Danzig and Gotenhafen defensive regions in advance. Main blow. flanks of the 49th and 70th armies, "reinforced by two tank corps. They were supposed to "cut the enemy grouping into two isolated parts" and go to the Danzig Bay in the Zoppot area. To complete this task, Generals Grishin and Popov assigned

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one day. In the future, one of the armies aimed at storming Danzig from the northwest, and the second was supposed to strike at Danzig from the north along the coast of the bay. The right wing of the front with the forces of the 2nd shock and 65th armies (with a mechanized corps) advanced on Danzig from the south and southwest. The troops of the left wing were ordered by the forces of the 19th and 1st Guards Tank Armies to capture Gotenhafen and capture the Putziger-Nerung (Hel) spit. Directly for cleaning the spit was

A detachment of the 40th Guards Tank Brigade was detached, which included 7 tanks, a battery of 76-mm guns and three infantry platoons. By this time, the front's total offensive zone had narrowed to 50 kilometers - 10 kilometers per army. Each combined arms army was assigned one or two engineer-sapper brigades, including the most elite "special forces" of that time - three assault brigades of the RVGK, which included flamethrower-tank regiments, battalions of knapsack flamethrowers and selected, heavily armed fighters in steel bibs-cuirasses of the CH-42 brand.

The ground troops were supported by the entire aviation of the front.

By the way, what was to be stormed? Information is given by historians A.S. Zavyalov and T.E. Kalyadin:

"The Danzig defensive area consisted of two defensive lines equipped with field-type engineering combat structures (trenches, trenches, open machine-gun platforms, bunker). The first line of defense, 3-5 km deep, ran along the line of Bürgerwiesen, Ora, Praust, Unter-Kalbude, Zukau, Gletkau and consisted of five lines of trenches. The second line of defense was equipped 5-7 km from the city of Danzig and its flanks rested against the coast of the bay. It consisted of three positions. The first position, passing along the Bankau line, height 160, Oliva, had two or four lines of trenches with a total depth of up to 1.5-2.5 km. The second position ran along the Takendorf line, west of Lauenthal, Bresen, and consisted of two lines of trenches, combined with a system of strong points. The third position was equipped directly on the outskirts of the city.

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On the southeast side, the city of Danzig was covered by tank-inaccessible terrain and a canal, as well as a system of old fortress forts. The city of Danzig itself was also prepared for defense. Almost all large stone buildings were adapted for firing from machine guns and cannons; window and door openings were filled with sandbags. Buildings and quarters were interconnected by communication passages and trenches. Barricades were erected on the streets, and bunkers at the intersections of the streets. Guided mines were planted in houses and on central streets.

The Gdynia defensive area consisted of two defense lines. When organizing this area, the enemy used previously built long-term defensive structures, equipped artillery positions and observation posts and reinforced them with a system of trenches, trenches and barriers, which allowed him to quickly encircle the city of Gdynia with a continuous ring of defensive structures within a radius of 12-15 km.

The first line of defense, the front line of which ran along the Zoppot, Kvashin, Kolletzkau, Reda, Reva line, consisted of two positions with five lines of trenches with a total depth of 3-5 km. The second line of defense was equipped at a distance of 7 km from the city of Gdynia with the front line along the Kolibken, Weltzendorf, Yanowo line and had three lines of trenches and four or five long-term firing structures and wood-and-earth firing structures on | km front.

The city of Gdynia was also well prepared for defense and street fighting. In the event of a forced withdrawal from the Gdynia region to the north, the enemy prepared a defensive area on the so-called Oxhöft bridgehead. The front line of defense on this bridgehead passed along the heights at the line of Oxheft, Oblush, Casimir.

To ensure the junction between the Danzig and Gdynia defensive areas, the enemy built a defensive position along the line of Zukau, Exau, Koble, Kolletzkau with a large stronghold in the area of height. 221. This position had three intermittent trenches. At a distance of 4-5 km from this position, trenches were built: two - on

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border Ramkau, Kvashin; one trench - at the Brnewitz-Witgstock line. A continuous minefield was placed along this trench.

For anti-tank defense, the enemy prepared anti-tank ditches, barriers, barricades and reinforced concrete gouges in the areas of Danzig and Gdynia. Near anti-tank obstacles, single trenches were equipped for tank destroyers armed with faustpatrons.

Behind all these fortifications, ditches, minefields, a labyrinth of stone buildings, the organized retreating troops of the 2nd Army sat down, commanded by General Dietrich von Saucken on March 12. He had at hand 16 divisions of "different denominations" (about 120 thousand people), including two tank divisions (4th and 7th) and the 4th SS Panzer-Grenadier Division "Policeman", having, on the advice of - According to the data, "a significant force of infantry, 200 tanks and assault guns, 180 batteries of artillery and mortars and more than 100 aircraft."

The defense system widely used the structures of stationary anti-aircraft batteries located at dominant heights, whose 88-mm and 128-mm guns could be used to fire both at air and ground targets. In addition, the actions of the troops of the 2nd Army were supported by coastal defense artillery and warships located in the Danzig Bay, in particular, eight-inch heavy cruiser Prince Eugen. As A.Kh. Babadzhanyan: "Ships in the roadstead are raging - they are continuously shelling coastal roads and settlements. It is impossible to calm them down - they stand at such a distance that they are inaccessible to our artillery, and even more so to tank guns. Unfavorable weather does not allow our aviation to do this either.

By the way, Rokossovsky, following other Soviet commanders, did not fail to note that in 1945 the "Ghitler fanatics" resisted fiercely, defending every line, every city to the last bullet, and once surrounded, they tried to forge as many as possible. Soviet troops. The fighting of that period is different

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lied with exceptional cruelty. The marshal explains this "fanaticism" by the threat of the death penalty, how can a German defend his homeland!

However, as in any army, especially an army leaving its own territories, cowards and deserters were also executed in the Wehrmacht: gallows were erected in the squares of these cities themselves. On them, our troops found more than 140 hanged men, to whom were attached signs with the inscription "Hanged for leaving positions without permission" or "Hanged for cowardice." Comrade Stalin also set up shibenitsa in the liberated cities for traitors and war criminals. In the same way as in the Red Army, for soldiers "who were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment, but promised to improve", there were "five hundredth", penal battalions in the Wehrmacht, which General Raus highly appreciated: "These units were located in the most dangerous points. The penal battalions were commanded by the most experienced officers and non-commissioned officers, and these units performed well. The temporary improvisation gradually turned into a permanent structure, which received universal approval. It was considered successful not only by the prisoners, but also by the commanders of the units, who were given penal battalions." All kaku

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It doesn't matter. Another thing is important: it was already quite clear that on their own land the "intimidated" and "fooled" Germans were fighting to the death. In addition, at the final stage of the war, having an unlimited number of weapons and equipment, all Soviet divisions suffered from a chronic understaffing of personnel - they knocked out the men. "During the offensive from the Vistula to Danzig," General Batov confirms, "we had one peculiarity: there was a lot of fire, and there was an acute shortage of firepower. Didn't receive refills. No more than 40 percent remained in the divisions

personnel. They cleaned up the rear, reduced the riders, leaving two or three horses for each. They even sent a company of guards to the division headquarters.

missions, leaving the soldiers only for night posts. German

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commanders, on the contrary, complained about the lack of weapons, fuel, ammunition, and the shortage of trained officers, but there were enough soldiers in the Wehrmacht.

Then where did Konstantin Konstantinovich get such enthusiasm for Danzig? Or was he so ignorant of the enemy?

In the presentation of Sergeant Nikulin, the marshal's plan was simple:

"The resistance of the Germans was strong, our losses, as always, were great, and the siege of the city dragged on. One fine morning, leaflets rained down from the sky on our heads, as well as on Danzig. They said something like this: "I, Marshal Rokossovsky, order the Danzig garrison to lay down their arms within twenty-four hours. Otherwise, the city will be stormed, and all responsibility for civilian casualties and destruction will fall on the heads of the German command ... "The text of the leaflets was in Russian and German. It was clearly intended for both sides. Rokossovsky acted in the best Suvorov traditions:

- Guys, here is the fortress! It has wine and women! Take it - walk for three days! And the Turks will answer.

Rokossovsky was a romantic. Zhukov is that stern, tough, businesslike person, and this one is a romantic."

On the morning of March 14, after a short artillery preparation, the troops of the 2nd Belorussian Front rushed to the assault.

The five-kilometer path of the 70th and 49th armies to the coast of the Danzig Bay with a phased gnaw through, one after another, of four defensive positions took twelve days of continuous fighting, "sometimes the destruction of a large defensive stronghold took several days." The daily progress in the March mud amounted to hundreds of meters and was paid for with considerable blood. Soviet units broke into Tsopot on the morning of March 25, dividing the enemy grouping into two parts. In the area of Gotenhafen, the remnants of the 7th and 46th tank corps were blocked; units of the 23rd, 27th, 20th Army Corps, and the 18th Mountain Rifle Corps remained in the Danzig area.

The battle for Gotenhafen was fought by the 19th and 1st Panzer armies.

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until March 28th. In the course of capturing the city and the port, they took almost 19 thousand prisoners, about 200 tanks and assault guns, 600 guns, 71 aircraft, 6246 vehicles, 20 various ships, including the wreck of a battleship sunk by the Germans in the roadstead "Gneisenau" and artillery training ship "Schleswig-Holstein". The latter, having started service in 1908 in the status of a squadron battleship, was raised after the war and served in the USSR Navy for almost a year. The remnants of the German garrison partly left on ships, partly retreated to the north, to the bridgehead in the Okshoef area.

The 1st Guards Tank Army, which lost 403 combat vehicles for various reasons, was withdrawn from the front and returned to the Berlin direction. After inspection and repair of equipment, it turned out that only 92 armored units were suitable for further operation. It's not scary: trains with new

"thirty-fours". The problem was only with new tankers: the reinforcements did not know the structure of the combat vehicle well, the drivers had 6-10 hours of driving and mixed gears.

On March 30, the troops of the 2nd shock, 65th and 49th armies took the city and port of Danzig: "Danzig was taken rather quickly, although almost the entire army was killed near its walls. But it was customary - one horde more, one less, what's the difference. There are many people in Russia, and new ones will be born quickly! And then they were born! Everything was as usual: a drunken frenzy, hellish shelling and bombing. With obscene abuse they went forward. One out of ten did. Then the fun began. Fluff flew from featherbeds, songs, dances, plenty of grub, you can roam around the shops, apartments. Houses are burning, women are screaming. Walked happily"

The trophies were really rich, including 140 tanks and self-propelled guns, 358 field guns and 45 submarines that worried the Anglo-Americans so much. Total from 10 February to 4 April

' troops of the 2nd Belorussian Front captured 63.6 thousand. Chi soldiers and officers captured 3470 guns and mortars, . 680 tanks and assault guns, 431 aircraft. Own ' losses during this period amounted to 173 thousand people, irretrievably - more than 40 thousand. The surviving defenders of Danzig

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left to the southeast, to the swampy area between the mouths of the Vistula and Notgat.

The remnants of the German 2nd Army, pressed to the sea north of Gotenhafen, were finally defeated and captured by the forces of the 19th Army on April 4. The units blockaded on the Hel Spit and in the delta of the Vistula River - approximately 120 thousand people, continued to resist until May 9, ensuring the evacuation of tens of thousands of refugees by sea. All this time they were "guarded" and unsuccessfully tried to liquidate the formations of the 19th Army of General V.Z3. Romanovsky, 5th Tank Army General M.D. Sinenkoi | th Tank Brigade of the Polish Army.

The troops of the right wing of the 1st Belorussian Front spent almost a month trying to break through to the lower reaches of the Oder.

Fulfilling the instructions of the Headquarters of March 5, Zhukov decided to use the forces of the 7th Rifle Corps, Major General V.A. Chistov, formations of the [th Army of the Polish Army, with the involvement of part of the forces of the | th Guards Tank Army, no later than March 7, destroy the enemy grouping in the area south of Schifelbein, capture Kolberg and clear the Germans of all territory in the zone of operations of these formations. It was planned to complete the defeat of the 3rd Panzer Army and reach the Oder on the front from the Baltic Sea to Zeden with the forces of the rest of the armies by advancing to the west and northwest. After that, two cavalry corps and several Polish formations were to organize the defense of the sea coast and the eastern bank of the Oder, and the liberated troops were to regroup in the Berlin direction.

During the course of March 7, formations of the 1st Army of the Polish Army, the 7th Rifle Corps of the 3rd Shock Army and part of the || unable to complete the task. The remnants of the 10th SS Corps, Lieutenant General Günther Krappe (however, already without Krappe, who was captured on March 6) broke through to the northwest, to Treptow and Hoff, where they occupied a semicircular

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defense on the seaside bridgehead measuring 20 by 40 kilometers. Here, in the settlements of Pusthof and Goff, there were moorings suitable for receiving ships. Here, following the last order of General Routh, on March 7, the battle group "Tettau" made its way, which was joined by "fragments" of the 18th mountain rifle corps - the 33rd SS division "Charlemagne" and the 15th SS division.

The Soviet command assumed that the Germans were going to be evacuated by sea, and sought to prevent this.

Since Katukov's tankers came under the control of the 2nd Belorussian Front, on March 8, Marshal Zhukov instructed the troops of the 7th Rifle and 7th Cavalry Corps to liquidate the enemy's coastal grouping. At the same time, the 79th Rifle Corps was supposed to block the path to the west, the infantrymen of the 7th Rifle Corps - to carry out pressure from the south, the horsemen - to drive the enemy further to the east. The general management of the operation, which began on the morning of March 10, was entrusted to the headquarters of the 3rd shock army. By the end of the day, the 207th division of the 79th rifle corps, reinforced by motorcycle and anti-tank regiments, bypassed Gross-Justin, made its way to the coast, captured Pusthof and started a battle for Goff. The attack of the cavalry corps on Karnitz (15 kilometers west of Treptow) was not successful. In order to assist the cavalry, General Simonyak ordered two divisions of the 7th Rifle Corps to turn to the northeast and take Karnitz, while the cavalry advanced on Treptow. At that time, the enemy, hiding behind barriers, left the Treptow area and concentrated the main forces of the breakthrough in the Goff area against the 207th Infantry Division. At the same time, in the zone of the 171st Rifle Division, the Germans prepared a counterattack from the side of the town of Divenov (now Dziwnów), located at the base of the spit blocking the mouth of the Oder.

Further events were the result of the lack of reconnaissance and proper interaction between Soviet formations and the self-confidence of some commanders, convinced that the enemy was not going anywhere. Meanwhile, as noted

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commander of the 150th rifle division, General V.M. Shatilov, "the Germans here were in some ways more organized than us, in some ways more enterprising. Moreover, they were given strength by despair.

On the morning of March 11, the Germans defeated the 207th and 171st rifle divisions with "organized" surprise attacks and pushed them back 5-8 kilometers to the south. The next day, the last units of the Gettau group broke out of the ring by the sea and went west, to Divenov. There was a freeway bridge to Wolin Island; approaches to it were defended to the last by German sailors.

According to the memoirs of General G.G. Semyonov, the former head of the operational department of the army, was attacked by the Germans in a desperate, unusual manner: "With the support of powerful fire, the drunken Nazis went on the attack at full height in several chains. In a bloody fierce battle, they crushed the battle formation of the 597th regiment. Up to 4,000 fascists rushed through the forest to the west and attacked the 525th rifle regiment of the 171st division from the rear, inflicting heavy losses on it. The dashing blow of the cavalymen of General M.P. Konstantinov fell on an empty place: "The main enemy forces were no longer there."

According to Raus, "General von Tettau brought with him about 20,000 soldiers from various units and about 30,000 refugees, who, with their cars and carts, huddled along the road to his soldiers." All military equipment was lost by the Germans in battles or abandoned due to lack of fuel. From the 5th Chasseurs, 163rd and 402nd Infantry Divisions "Berwalde" and "Pomerania" in fact only numbers remained. In addition, the commander of the 402nd division, Siegfried von Spainitz, and the commander of the Berwalde division, General Willy Reitel, were "lost in the forest" and were captured. The "tankless" division "Holstein" survived better than others, but it had to be disbanded.

Naturally, Zhukov did not like such a "puncture", and the echo of the marshal's discontent walked for a long time through the headquarters of all levels.

"By the end of the day on March 12, the situation on the right flank of the army was completely restored," recalls Semyonov, "

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, the entire coast from Deep to Valddivenov is completely cleared of the enemy. However, the very fact of a group of fascists breaking through our battle formations was unpleasant. Against the backdrop of great successes, he had no serious significance. But this fly in the ointment

, ruined a barrel of honey for us. Marshal Zhukov again expressed his sharp displeasure to General Simonyak. I had to

,to prepare for sending to the headquarters of the front various reports and

, explanations ... There is nothing to hide: the army had enough strength to prevent in Pomerania breakthrough of the surrounded enemy. However, the necessary diligence was not shown."

The debriefing ended with the resignation of the army commander. He was "of his own free will" transferred to the "Kurlyadsky Front" to command the 67th Army.

General Raus, after an unsuccessful report from the Fuhrer, was also removed from his post and dismissed. General Hasso von Manteuffel was appointed to command the 3rd Panzer Army. Colonel General Walter Weiss took over at the head of Army Group North, replacing Rendulich, on March 12.

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The defeat of the enemy, who continued to hold the Gollnov area, was assigned to the 12th Guards Rifle Corps and the 12th Guards Tank Corps. Lieutenant A.F. Kazankin, from the northeast. In addition, the 9th Guards Tank Corps, Major General N.D. among the forests on both banks of the relatively small river Ina, was a difficult obstacle for the attackers. The swampy terrain prevented maneuvering. "Frundsberg" under the command of Brigadeführer Heinz Harmel (an interesting point: being a member of the Order of the SS from a young age, Harmel did not stand in the Nazi party). th

_ Despite the difficulties and obstacles, the Soviet Union

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after three days of stubborn fighting on March 7, they took the city by storm. Thus, the troops of the 3rd shock army completed their task, and they were ordered, by transferring combat areas to the formations of the Polish Army and the 7th Guards Cavalry Corps, to concentrate by March 16 in the Zoldin, Königsberg (Pomeranian) area. Here Colonel-General V.I. Kuznetsov.

The Polish army, together with the 2nd Guards Cavalry Corps, was supposed to capture Kolberg and complete the clearance of the enemy from the entire coastal region. The number of defenders of the city, overflowing with echelons with the wounded and refugees, amounted to 4 thousand people - a machine-gun battalion, a construction battalion, a Volkssturm battalion. Of the heavy weapons, there were 6 out-of-service tanks, 8 light field howitzers and a battery of anti-aircraft guns. In addition, destroyer 2-43 provided artillery support. The military commandant offered to simply surrender the "fortress" without a fight and was immediately removed from his post. On the eve of the assault, a new commandant, Colonel Fritz Fuhlride, was delivered to Kolberg by plane. Under his command, the garrison held out until March 18. By then, nearly 70,000 civilians and the wounded had been evacuated by sea, with the last few hundred defenders leaving Kolberg aboard a destroyer.

The offensive of the 61st and 47th armies, which advanced in the Stettin direction, was somewhat slower, striking from the east and south on Altdamm.

The troops of General Belov, advancing in a westerly direction, met stubborn resistance from the 3rd SS Panzer Corps in the area of the city of Massov and managed to cover only 10-12 kilometers in three days. On the night of March 7, the SS units, engulfed from the flanks, left the city and retreated to Altdamm. The SS division "Frundsberg" also departed from Gollnov here.

No less intense battles were waged at that time by the army of General Perkhovich. The presence of a large number of streams, wetlands and artificial obstacles created

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great difficulty for the attackers. The enemy's flanks rested against natural barriers - the Oder River and Lake Dammsee, and the divisions of the 47th Army primitively moved forward into well-equipped positions.

By Zhukov's decision of March 12, the offensive of the 2nd Panzer, 61st and 47th armies was suspended and the "correct" preparations for the assault on Altdamm, the last center of resistance in Eastern Pomerania, began. It was necessary to conduct a thorough reconnaissance of the front line of the enemy's defense, his fire system, artillery firing positions, and work out the interaction of the combat arms. To carry out artillery preparation, it was ordered to reinforce the armies with four breakthrough artillery divisions, to create an artillery density of 250-280 guns and mortars per kilometer of the front. All assault and 90% of bomber aircraft were involved in aviation support. The 2nd Guards Tank Army was to regroup its forces on the right flank of the 47th Army and advance jointly with rifle formations, using their combat vehicles to directly support the infantry. According to the list of Bogdanov's army, there were 603 tanks and self-propelled guns; in fact, 246 combat vehicles were in service.

On the German side, on the Altdamm bridgehead that covered Stettin, the SS divisions "Nordland" and "Netherlands" dug in, the 10th SS Panzer Division "Frundsberg", the 281st Infantry, the 549th People's Grenadiers, the 25th Panzer Grenadier Division, Schlesien Panzer Division, II Marine Division, Assault Gun Brigade. The density of the German defense here was 5-7 kilometers per division.

On March 15, at 9:00 am, after an hour and a half of artillery and aviation preparation, the Soviet troops resumed their offensive. The enemy resisted desperately for a thirty meter position. Only five days later Perkhovich's rifle divisions, together with Bogdanov's brigades, reached the Oder between Altdamm and Greifenhagen and cut the enemy grouping into two parts. German attempts

cut off the Soviet wedge with angle blows were repulsed. Conscious of the hopelessness of the situation, General von Mantoy

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fel, having received Hitler's permission, on March 19 began the withdrawal of his troops from the east to the west bank of the Oder. German sappers began to systematically undermine buildings and urban structures.

Just on this day, under the influence of another bout of "total-apocalyptic mood", the Fuhrer issued an order for the forced evacuation of the civilian population from the frontline zone to the central regions of the country (if there is no transport, "let them march on foot") and the unconditional destruction of all material resources in the abandoned territories of Germany:

"The struggle for the existence of our people compels us to apply on the territory of the Reich all measures that help to reduce the power of our enemy and delay his advance in

the interior of the country. In this case, all possibilities of causing direct or indirect damage to the enemy should be used. It is a misconception that enterprises and facilities of transport, communications, industry and supplies that have not been destroyed and simply stopped their activity can be re-launched when the lost territories are returned. In the event of a retreat, the enemy will leave us only scorched earth and will not allow the resumption of production for the needs of the population."

Industrial enterprises, sources and means of transmission of electricity, water pipes and gas networks, bridges and roads, locomotives, cars and ships, transport and communication centers, food and clothing warehouses were subject to destruction by any means. Nothing was to fall into the hands of the enemy, "not a single German stalk should become food for the enemy", he should meet "only death, ruins and hatred". Responsibility for execution rested with the military, together with the Gauleiters and the Reich Defense Commissars.

Imperial Minister Speer, General Guderian, many sober-minded military men, industry leaders, did their best to sabotage the execution of the directive. It is one thing to leave behind "scorched earth" in the Soviet Union - "this destructive policy was based on sober

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operational considerations", it is quite another to turn one's own country into a desert on the eve of defeat and doom the nation to extinction in the post-war period.

When the rebel Hitler only dreamed of power, he, promising to benefit all Germans on the planet, wrote: "State authority cannot be an end in itself, because in this case any tyranny on earth would be inviolable and sacred. If the government uses its power to lead a people to destruction, then the rebellion of every member of such a people is not only justified, but also its duty.

Now the Fuhrer was completely indifferent to what kind of "stalks" the Germans would chew. For all Speer's reasons about the need to preserve the "basis of life of the people" for its revival in the future, Hitler stated in an "icy tone": "When a war is lost, the people die. There is no need to pay attention to the foundations of the further most primitive existence of the German people. On the contrary, it is better to just destroy these things yourself. Because our people turned out to be weak, and the future belongs to a stronger eastern people. In addition, after the battle, only inferior people will survive, because the full ones will die on the battlefield.

The people turned out to be unworthy of their leader - so much the worse for the people.

What can you say? As the experience of the 20th century shows, all revolutionaries and fighters for the people's happiness, from Lenin to Pol Pot, having seized upon the helm, turned out to be outright scumbags and lawlessness if they were not shot in time..

On March 20, German units left the Altdamm

`damm and blew up the last bridge behind them. The troops of the 61st Army "captured the almost completely destroyed Altdamm, and the 47th Army - Greifenhagen. The Soviet troops took more than 12,000 prisoners, 126 tanks and self-propelled guns, more than 200 guns, 154 mortars and other weapons.

. The eastern coast was completely cleared of the enemy in the entire zone of operations of the 1st Belorussian Front. From March 21, That Marshal Zhukov began a regrouping of forces in the Berlin 'Management.

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As a result of the East Pomeranian offensive operation, the Red Army defeated the East Pomeranian grouping of the enemy, which included more than 30 divisions. In this operation, the Nazi troops lost more than 100,000 soldiers and officers as prisoners alone. The Soviet troops took about 3,000 guns, about 2,000 mortars, up to 1,000 tanks and self-propelled guns, more than 8,000 machine guns, several warships and submarines, and many other military property. The enemy lost not only the East Pomeranian bridgehead, but also a significant part of the coast of the Baltic Sea.

The total losses of the two fronts by April 4 amounted to 225.6 thousand people (53 thousand irrevocably), 1027 tanks and self-propelled guns, 1073 aircraft, 1005 guns and mortars. About 9 thousand more Poles lost.

This ended the military career of Himmler. In mid-March, worried about the lack of clear information, Guderian arrived at the headquarters of the Wisla Army Group and was indignant to learn that the Reichsfuehrer, mournful with a sore throat, had been "managing" the fighting from a sanatorium in the suburbs of Berlin for the second week already: "Himmler felt bearable; I would never have abandoned my troops in such a situation because of a slight cold. In a private conversation, the general persuaded the all-powerful SS man to resign and himself suggested to Hitler that the Reichsfuehrer, "overburdened with various posts," be relieved of the post of commander of the Vistula Army Group. On March 20, Colonel General Gotthard Heinrici was appointed in his place.

Simultaneously with the East Pomeranian operation, the troops of the left wing of the 1st Byelorussian Front in the Berlin direction continued to fight for the expansion and retention of bridgeheads on the left bank of the Oder and the liquidation of the Kustrinsky garrison.

"A Goth who has visited the bridgehead at least once during the war," recalls the Chief of Staff of the 8th Guards Army, General V.A. Belyavsky, - for the rest of his life he kept in his memory the atmosphere of enormous everyday tension. It doesn't

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left no one behind. And the experienced scout, who here, on the bridgehead, more often than usual had to go on a search, and the battalion commander, who constantly thinks about how to cling to the ground more firmly and at the same time be always ready to attack, and the field medic, for whom crossing the river for a seriously wounded person became a real problem, and for the rear, painfully thinking about how to deliver shells, food, barrels of gasoline to the "patch", and the pontooner, whose exorbitant work every now and then came to naught - the crossings were often destroyed by bombs. Many tasks arose before the staff officers. The situation here was rarely stable. And the position of an unstable balance obliged us to think and think about how to turn it in our favor.

The Germans struggled to eliminate the Russian "springboard" for the jump on Berlin.

On March 1, Hitler ordered Colonel Baumbach, Inspector General of Bomber Aviation, to attack Soviet crossings across the Oder-Neisse. Colonel, previously involved in secret projects of the Luftwaffe,

,to carry out such a responsible task, I decided to use samples from the arsenal of "weapons of retribution."

On Sunday, March 4, the Fuehrer personally visited the Oder Front, visited the command post of the 1091st Army Corps, in the divisions "Deberitz" and "Berlin". Goebbels was touched most of all: "The impression caused by the Fuehrer's visit among the officers and soldiers is enormous. I would consider it right that now the Fuehrer goes to the front more often. This would put an end to the disgusting rumors that

That the Führer allegedly does not care enough about the front. He, of course, cares enough, but his care is not manifested in the form that is accessible to the primitive soldier's perception. And yet, for psychological reasons,

: How would it be necessary that the Führer, in a purely personal and number

1"

« On the human plane, it appeared to the eyes of the front-line soldiers as follows: What is it like in reality.

And on March 6, Soviet crossings were attacked by Dornier-217 aircraft from the 200th bomber squadron. Each "DYY" carrier on an external sling carried two planning

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Henschel-293 air bombs controlled by radio commands. In principle, it was an air-to-ground anti-ship missile with an armor-piercing warhead weighing 1260 kg, designed to sink large surface ships, that is, a thing for a completely different purpose. But in this case, it was important that such a bomb could be dropped from a height of 6000 meters at a distance of 16 kilometers - beyond the effective fire of Soviet anti-aircraft divisions. According to the reports of the pilots, they managed to hit the bridge near Goeritz, which, however, did not affect the actions of the Russians in any way.

In addition, in March the crossings were attacked by Mistel-type air couplers. The design was a Me-109 or FV-190 fighter, which was placed on the fuselage of an attack vehicle converted from a Yu-88 bomber into a 20-ton "air torpedo" stuffed with explosives and fuel. Controlled from the cockpit of a fighter, the Mistel took off and headed towards the target, using fuel from the tanks of the projectile aircraft. Having reached the given area, the pilot aimed the bomber at the target, uncoupled and returned to the base using the fuel of his car. Initially, the system with a practical range of 2000 (in the latest modifications - 4100) kilometers and a cumulative warhead weighing 3500 kg was intended to strike at naval bases, clusters of ships and industrial facilities. However, in March 1945, a rare "bird" could reach the Urals, Ska-pa-Flow or the middle of the Dnieper, especially since the cruising speed of the coupling did not exceed 380 km / h. Therefore, the Mistels were thrown into tasks that were not characteristic of them: striking at crossings over the Oder, Neisse and Rhine, railway junctions and concentrations of allied troops. In the face of strong opposition from front-line aviation and air defense, they suffered heavy losses without inflicting tangible damage on the enemy. True, there was a lot of roar, and, as Chuikov recalls, "the craters from the explosions were huge": "We thought, is the game worth the candle? Hitting a bridge under construction with such an expensive weapon is unjustified waste. But the Nazi command was not up to economic

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calculations." Damage to crossings was quickly repaired by sappers.

Between the bridgeheads captured by units of the 5th Shock and 8th Guards Armies, a large communication center, the city of Kustrin, located on the eastern bank of the Oder, at the confluence of the Warta, got stuck in the throat. The garrison of the next "fortress" totaled 16.8 thousand people, including Volkssturm and Schutzmanns; the civilian population was evacuated. Reinefart, the former Warsaw police chief, "a good police officer, but by no means a general" was appointed commandant.

On March 6, Soviet troops launched an operation to unite the bridgeheads.

37th Guards Rifle Division Colonel G.B. Smolina, reinforced by the 327th penal company, with the support of two self-propelled artillery regiments and the 100th howitzer brigade of high power, attacked the Kustrinsky suburb of Kitz from the south. Before that, the dive-bombers of the 3rd bomber corps laid five 1000-kilogram bombs exactly on the target. Still, the street fighting was extremely stubborn. Later V.I. Chuikov told it like a joke: "The soldiers captured a German officer from the fortress. During interrogation, Chuikov asked him:

"After all, you are doomed, why don't you give up?"

" The prisoner replied:

"Mr. General, we have a division defending there, and you have placed a regiment in front of it and you want us to raise our hands, because this is indecent for the military. Send at least two divisions, then there is no shame in surrendering."

Only by the evening of March 13 did the Soviet assault groups completely take possession of the ruins of Kitz. Not a single whole house was left inside.

At the same time, the 32nd Rifle Corps of the 5th Shock Army, reinforced by three penal companies, flamethrower and assault engineer battalions, two separate tank regiments, with massive support from aviation and artillery up to 280 mm caliber, stormed Neuschadt, the northern Part of city. By the end of March 12, the last

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pockets of German resistance were eliminated. The remnants of the garrison, blowing up the bridges behind them, went beyond the Varta and took refuge in the ancient citadel, located on a man-made island at the confluence of two rivers. The floodplain was flooded with spring waters. Only dams and embankments connected the citadel to the mainland.

On March 13, Zhukov ordered the army commanders to prepare counter attacks on Goltsov on the western bank of the Oder and close the flanks. At that time, the two armies were separated by a narrow corridor to Küstrin about three kilometers wide, which was held by units of the Müncheberg Panzer Division (21 tanks and 5 self-propelled guns) and the Deberitz Infantry Division.

To accomplish the task, General Chuikov assigned the 4th Guards Rifle Corps (35th, 57th, 57th Guards Divisions) under General V.A. Glazunov. Its formations were reinforced by the 20th Tank Brigade, the 259th Tank Regiment, the 34th 50th Guards Tank Regiments, the 1087th Self-Propelled Artillery Regiment, the 29th Breakthrough Artillery Division, the 100th High Power Artillery Brigade, th and 25th anti-tank brigades, 295th and 1091st cannon artillery regiments, 59th guards mortar regiment. As a result, 641 pieces of artillery and mortars, 162 tanks and self-propelled guns were assembled on the three-kilometer section of the breakthrough.

General Berzarin decided to re-engage the 295th and 416th divisions of the 32nd Rifle Corps, which participated in the assault on Neustadt. They were to be supported by the 69th Heavy Tank Brigade, the 220th Tank Brigade, the 89th Heavy Tank Regiment, the 124th High Power Artillery Brigade, the 32nd Special Power Artillery Battalion, and the 14th Artillery Division. breakthrough, 4th Guards Anti-Tank Brigade, 5th Guards Mortar Division, 37th Guards Mortar Regiment, 5th Division of M-31 Guards Mortars. As a result, an operational density of 190 guns and mortars, 100 tanks and self-propelled guns per kilometer of front was achieved.

The entire assault aviation of the 16th Air Army was involved in the operation. On the eve of the offensive storm pilots

The howling and bomber aviation for four days methodically delivered blows to the enemy, violating his defense system and control. According to the schedule, the artillerymen conducted aimed fire at various sectors.

On the morning of March 22, after an hour-long artillery and aviation treatment of the front line and rear of the enemy, infantry and escort tanks went on the attack. By the end of the day, the troops of the two armies joined in the designated area, and the garrison of the Kustra fortress with the few surviving forts and the citadel was isolated from all sides. Two small bridgeheads on the left bank of the Oder were combined into one bridgehead of operational importance. All German counterattacks, in which on March 23-24 General Busse engaged the Müncheberg Panzer Division, the 25th and 20th Panzergrenadier Divisions, were repulsed. At the occupied line, the Russians rooted into the ground, covered themselves with minefields, bristling with anti-tank guns.

The liquidation of the Kustrin bridgehead and the restoration of communication with Kustrin were the first tasks that had to be solved by the new commander of the Vistula Army Group, General Heinrici. Moreover, Hitler had already thought of everything: quietly collect five divisions in the Frankfurt area, transfer them to the eastern bank of the Oder, where the Germans held a bridgehead, and strike from south to north - in the rear of the 69th and 8th Guards armies. However, the insufferable Guderian considered such an offensive futile and proposed to the project to throw the Russians off the bridgehead and restore contact with the Kustrin garrison. Heinrici was also leaning towards doing something smaller. Again "protracted disputes began", which this time ended in a "victory" for the military.

In addition to the units already participating in the battles, the Führer Grenadier Division, the 1001 Nights battle group, and the 502nd SS heavy tank battalion were involved in the release operation. The main striking force of the group, united by the headquarters of the 39th Panzer Corps, was 39 "King's Tigers" from the Müncheberg division and a heavy battalion and 70 self-propelled guns of various types. offensive

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The battle began at 4 am on March 27, and by evening it became clear that it had failed miserably. The German gunners ran out of ammunition very quickly, the "tigers" got stuck in the minefields, the infantry under the hurricane fire of Soviet guns and rocket mortars refused to attack. The attempt was repeated the next day - with the same success and heavy losses. True, under the guise of Kustrin, to the fury of the Fuhrer, General Reinefarth managed to escape with a small group. Another part of the defenders, without receiving any orders, remained in the fortress.

Hitler blamed the failure on the General Staff, the commander of the 9th Army and the troops that did not show due heroism. At a conference held on March 28, Guderian quarreled with the Fuhrer for the last time on this matter and was sent on a six-week leave to improve his health. After taking a day off for 42 days, the "father of the German tank troops" surrendered to the Americans on May 10, 1945. It is noteworthy that, having received the rank of colonel general for the French campaign, he never rose to the rank of field marshal. The last Chief of the General Staff of the Ground Forces was General Hans Krebs.

The Kyustrinsky citadel, after a two-day assault "from land and sea", was taken on March 30 by the troops of the 8th Guards Army.

The total losses of the two Soviet armies in the battle for the Kyustrinsky bridgehead from February 3 to March 30 amounted to 61,799 people, irretrievable - 15,466.

On April 2, Marshal Zhukov, who planned a private operation to capture Frankfurt, received a directive from the Headquarters instructing the troops of the front "in the entire strip to go over to a tough defense."

UPPER SILESIAN AND MORAVIAN-OSTRAVA OPERATIONS

Marshal Konev - he couldn't sit idle - also cleared the flanks. In the course of the Lower Silesian operation, the right wing and the center of the 1st Ukrainian Front advanced far to the west, while the southern wing remained in place.

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almost on the Oder line. Moreover, on the east coast, the enemy retained the Kyodnice bridgehead. As a result, a ledge was formed in the Oppeln-Ratibor area, from which the Germans could theoretically strike in a northwestern direction on Breslau and even "try to restore their former line of defense along the Oder."

Konev was sure that he would be able to repel any threat, but even the hypothetical danger worried the Headquarters, as well as the ghost of the 6th SS Panzer Army "wandering around Europe". The Supreme Commander repeatedly called the front commander and persistently drew attention to the fact that the Germans were going to strike in the Ratibor direction:

"Look," Stalin told me in one of these telephone conversations, "the Germans have not come to terms with the loss of Silesia and they can take it away from you."

In the end, it was decided not to tempt the enemy and to organize a lightning operation to level the front line with the armies of the southern wing reaching the level of the center along the Strehlen, Patschkau, Opava line, "so that in the future we would have more favorable conditions for going over to the offensive in the main strategic direction—Berlin." This version was told by Konev to the writer Simonov.

The plan developed at Konev's headquarters was approved on March 1. It is noteworthy that in the published collection of directives of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, there are no proposals from the commander " front to conduct the operation, and the decision of Mo

wells. One gets the impression that the original idea was much larger - all the fronts were supposed to "line up" in line.

In any case, the commander of the 4th Ukrainian Front was ordered by directive of February 17 to launch an offensive in the direction of Olomouc no later than March 10, during which the Moravian-Ostrava grouping of the enemy was to be destroyed and the industrial region of Moravska-Ostrava was to be captured. The blow inflicted by the armies of the genea-

_ Rala I.E. Petrov, was supposed to contribute to the offensive

troops operating in Upper Silesia and deprive the German command of the ability to maneuver reserves.

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The main task of the front was to break through to a depth of 450 kilometers, reach the line of the Vltava River and capture Prague.

At the same time (to be absolutely precise, five minutes later) Marshals Malinovsky and Tolbukhin received a directive "for an offensive operation to capture Vienna," which was to begin on March 15th.

The main efforts of the 4th Ukrainian Front were concentrated on the right wing in the bands of the 38th and 1st Guards Armies, which received the task of breaking through the enemy defenses on a 10-kilometer sector with adjacent flanks and, bypassing Moravska-Ostrava with south, to develop an offensive against Olomouc and Prerov, which were to be taken by the end of the eighth day of the operation. Actually

Speaking in this direction, General Petrov packed almost the entire front - 9 out of 11 rifle corps, all armored vehicles and all artillery, creating a density of 200 barrels per kilometer of breakthrough. The 18th Army with the Czechoslovak Corps continued to strike at Ruzhy Berok, Zilina, Kromerzhik, diverting and holding down enemy forces with active actions.

The front was reinforced by the 126th and 127th Light Mountain Rifle Corps, the 5th Guards Mechanized Corps, and the 24th Breakthrough Artillery Division. Taking into account the Czechoslovak units, there were 25 rifle divisions in it, | fortified area, | mechanized corps, 10 rifle and 4 tank brigades - 317 thousand people, about 500 tanks and self-propelled guns.

The enemy was the same - the Heinrici army group, from which, in front of the 4th Ukrainian Front, there were 6 infantry and 2 mountain rifle divisions and 2 combat groups - 150 thousand soldiers and officers with 100 tanks and self-propelled guns.

The Soviet offensive began exactly on time - March 10 at 7.45. The weather, to put it mildly, did not work out: a snow blizzard broke out in the night, visibility dropped to zero, "sights, binoculars, stereo tubes - everything was clogged with snow." According to Moskalenko, coman

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The darmas persuaded General Petrov, who arrived at the observation post of the 38th Army, to postpone the operation:

"Having met him together with a member of the Military Council A.A. Epishev and the army artillery commander, Colonel N.A. Smirnov, I reported that the troops were ready for the offensive, but the weather conditions did not allow artillery preparation to begin. It will not bring the desired results, I said, since the fire can only be fired at squares, and not at targets. In conclusion, he stated a request: to call the Supreme Commander-in-Chief and ask to reschedule the offensive.

I.E. Petrov disagreed:

"The dates are approved by the Headquarters, they are final," he answered. - I will not ask for a postponement of the offensive time.

After that, he called the commander of the 1st Guards Army, Colonel General A.A. Grechko, who, after the report on the readiness of the troops for the offensive, emphasized the inexpediency of starting artillery preparation in the current conditions... Unfortunately, the front commander rejected A.A. Grechko.

In addition, the Germans had fairly accurate information about the Soviet plans from intelligence agents and defectors from the Russian side, and before dawn quietly withdrew their troops into the second trench, leaving only cover on the front line.

For these reasons, 2,000 guns and mortars fired for 70 minutes "into white light". Aviation did not rise into the air. As a result, the enemy's fire system was not suppressed, his forces did not suffer significant losses, command and control and communications were not disrupted. The infantry of the divisions of the first echelon and the escort tanks, which had risen to the attack, after capturing the first line of trenches, were met with organized fire. By the end of the day, instead of breaking through to a depth of 23-25 kilometers, the troops of the shock group penetrated into the enemy defenses for 3-4 kilometers, capturing the village of Pavlovitsa and the village of Golyasovice. Accordingly, conditions were not created for the introduction of a mobile front group.

Along the way, interviewing the prisoners, found out that against

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Nick was aware of the start time of the offensive. The Soviet generals, of course, sinned against the "fascist spies" and "Gestapo agents", hiding their own shortcomings in the preparation of the operation, in particular, the lack of proper camouflage measures, which was directly written by the commander of the mortar battery F.I. Shushin:

"In that first attack on Moravska Ostrava, we really let ourselves down. I personally thought at the time that there were either few Germans left, or they even planned to end the war. I have never seen such a picture as there in the whole war. In the days of preparation for this offensive, our people did everything openly, but the Germans did not shoot at us. We let ourselves down great, but here the weather and the terrain - everything was against us. In relation to the bulk of the stuffed Germans, they told a great lie when they reported to the commander. I judge by my site, when we broke through their first line - on the railway. But from the second line that they had behind the forest, they gave us! There was no question of any progress then. We then lay like sons of bitches in the water. They tore off their mortars from their firing positions, it was impossible to place them atam. And when they somehow got used to it, from the very first shot they went into the ground. The soil there was marshy and unsteady.

On the afternoon of March 11, after a half-hour artillery preparation, the Soviet troops repeated the attempt, but on that day they managed to "gnaw through" only from 2 to Ekilometers:

"The limited number of roads and unfavorable meteorological conditions still did not allow the effective use of all the firepower of artillery and mortars concentrated in the breakthrough area. The mechanized corps, stretched out along the roads, was unable to use its maneuverability (in fact, the corps stood idle, clogging all the roads in the 38th Army zone with equipment and irritating the infantry: "In fact, it's probably psychologically difficult watch how dozens of steel boxes stand and wait behind their backs, afraid of being blown up by mines or falling under artillery fire, while unprotected people, infantrymen, go forward through these mines and through this artillery

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Lerian fire Probably, if you do not enter into the general plan of the operation, it can simply seem insulting from a human point of view").

Thus, the wrong choice of the direction of the main attack, the time of its implementation and the loss of the element of surprise began to have a negative effect.

The enemy gradually built up his forces, continuously counterattacked, and also "skillfully used the favorable terrain conditions for defense."

After the loss of the Ruhr Basin, the Moravian and Upper Silesian industrial regions with powerful deposits of iron ore and coking coal were of tremendous importance for the war-exhausted Reich. The most important military plants were concentrated here, producing self-propelled guns, armor, corgus of aerial bombs and artillery shells, massively riveting the notorious faustpatrons, and dozens of the largest enterprises in the metallurgical, machine-building, coal, chemical, textile and other industries. And therefore it is no coincidence that "the Nazis so desperately resisted."

In mid-March, the 8th tank division of Georg Hacks was deployed to the area of the Soviet wedging, which included 82 tanks and self-propelled guns (although only 26 combat vehicles were serviceable).

The advance faltered. Already on March 11, the 18th Army received permission to "strengthen on the achieved lines." The armies of Moskalenko and Grechko were marking time for another five days and on March 17 they were forced to stop the offensive. As the correspondent of Krasnaya Zvezda K.M. Simonov, the troops "managed to advance only that distance,

which, no matter how generously it was splattered with blood, is still not noted in the reports of the Information Bureau", to be more precise, it was possible to advance 12 kilometers along the main direction.

Member of the Military Council of the Front L.Z3. Mekhlis, looking at the map, joked bitterly: "It seems that the Second and First Ukrainian Fronts will encircle us soon." And he beat off directly in the Central Committee "mortgages" - the most commissar's work - about the unsatisfactory work of the commander.

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General Petrov, without losing optimism, decided within a week to regroup the main forces even more to the right, to the very junction of two fronts, and deliver a new blow through Zorau, Loslau, Troppau (Opava) bypassing Moravsk-Ostrava from the north, about which he reported to Headquarters. In response, the commander received a "final warning" from Stalin "for shortcomings in the leadership":

"The Headquarters of the Supreme High Command considers the explanations of General of the Army Petrov dated 17.03. 1945 No. 256 is unconvincing and states:

1. The front commander, General of the Army Petrov, having established the incomplete readiness of the front troops for the offensive, was obliged to report this to the Headquarters and ask for additional time for preparation, which the Headquarters would not refuse. But Army General Letrov did not take care of this or was afraid to directly report on the unpreparedness of the troops.

Colonel General Mekhlis, a member of the Military Council of the Front, informed the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks about the shortcomings in the preparation and organization of the offensive only after the operation was disrupted, instead of knowing about the incomplete readiness of the troops, in due time to warn the Stavka about this.

2. The command of the front and the armies failed to hide from the enemy the concentration of troops and the preparation of the offensive.

3. The headquarters of the front was scattered, and most of it was located 130 km from the offensive site.

The inability to prepare the operation, manifested in these shortcomings, determined its failure.

The next day, an order came from Moscow to transfer the 5th Zimovnikovsky Guards Mechanized Corps to the |-th Ukrainian Front - Marshal Konev had the case moving...

To achieve this goal, two strike groups were created on the left wing of the 1st Ukrainian Front. The northern (oppeln) army, which included the 34th guards rifle corps of the 5th guards army and the 4th guards tank corps, the 4th tank and 21st armies with the 10th breakthrough artillery corps, had the task apply

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strike from the Grottkau area to the southwest in the direction of the Neuss, Neustadt. The southern (Ratibor) grouping had to advance towards it, in the northwestern and western directions. It included the 59th and 60th Armies, which were given the 93rd Rifle Corps, the 7th Guards Mechanized Corps and the 31st Tank Corps, the 152nd Separate Tank Brigade, and the 17th Artillery Division from the front reserve. breakthrough. In total, 31 rifle divisions took part in the operation - 408 thousand soldiers and officers, 5640 guns and mortars, 988 tanks and self-propelled guns. In Lelyushenko's army alone, 478 combat vehicles were in service. One rifle division, 198 artillery and mortar barrels, and 43 tanks were concentrated on each kilometer of the breakthrough sites. The 2nd Air Army had 1,737 combat aircraft. The tank and mechanized corps had to break into the enemy defenses together with the fairly depleted infantry. On the second day of the offensive, it was planned to capture Neustadt and drive at least five German DIVISIONS into the "cauldron" in the Oppeln area.

"We counted," writes Konev, "first of all on the encirclement of that part of the German fascist troops, which were located on the Oppeln ledge itself and directly in Oppeln. By the way, this city has remained on the front line since the last battles - half of us, half of the enemy. According to maps and messages

'Sovinformburo, "since the time of past battles" the city of Oppeln was considered "ours", a salute in honor of its liberation was given in Moscow on January 24th. In the zone of upcoming hostilities, up to 15 divisions from the 17th field army and the army were defending. the Heinrici group, which had 1420 guns and mortars, 94 tanks and self-propelled guns. ' . - The Germans really did on March 8 with the forces of three infantry divisions made an attempt to "cut off" the bridgehead of the 59th Army between "Kozel and Ratibor. However, there was clearly not enough strength for this, and after three days the operation stalled.

*. The Soviet offensive began on the morning of March 15 and, as

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says Konev, "it took place in difficult conditions, at a somewhat slow pace." The troops of the northern group in the area of 8 kilometers broke through two positions and by the end of the day advanced only 8 kilometers deep, although according to the plan, the 10th Guards Tank Corps was supposed to capture the Neisse region by this time. Connections of the southern group overcame up to 10 kilometers.

Judging by the story of Konev, the preparation of the operation sinned with negligence and underestimation of the enemy. The marshal himself describes the difficulties ahead: "In five weeks, the Germans managed, in addition to field-type fortifications and engineering barriers at the forefront, to create fairly strong centers of resistance in their rear, prepare most of the settlements and even individual Houses. A dense network of buildings allowed the enemy to practically cover all or almost all of the space separating them with artillery and machine-gun fire. Trenches were dug between separate points, and spare firing positions were equipped. According to our aerial reconnaissance, the German defenses here stretched to a depth of 20-25 kilometers. In this operation, we had to deal with a very dense grouping that had been prepared in advance for defense ... We had plenty of Ming in front of us. The Germans piled them everywhere they could. In combination with the spring thaw and rugged terrain, minefields were a serious obstacle to the advance.

captivity."

With all this, in the band of the 21st Army, General D.G. Gusev, after the rapid capture of the first trench left by the Germans, the duration of artillery preparation. in order to save ammunition, was reduced by half. Then it turned out that "our artillery did not suppress by far all enemy firing points, especially anti-tank ones," and our reconnaissance "failed to reveal the system of enemy fire in all details." Unfortunately, in the first half of the day, due to weather conditions, aviation did not work, and there was little sense in improving the weather. The slush forced the tanks to operate exclusively along the roads and

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to pass through settlements "densely saturated" with faustniks and camouflaged anti-tank guns. Own artillery was chronically lagging behind, not providing continuous boat support for advanced units. The army of General Korovnik faced the same difficulties: "In order to save shells and less reveal themselves, the enemy fired exclusively aimed fire at targets in the depths, and to destroy the advanced units, mainly nomadic guns or self-propelled guns were allocated. The enemy kept the anti-tank guns in shelters until the last minute, until our tanks appeared in front of them. But even more intensively, he began to use faustpatrons. Not only artillery and tanks, but sometimes even combined-arms units and subunits kept to the roads, mostly paved. Clusters and traffic jams were created on the roads, traffic was often disrupted ... Stormtroopers fighting in

mainly at low altitudes and strafing flights, the orientation was complicated by the overcrowding of settlements, the insufficiently favorable meteorological situation, the high maneuverability of troops and the shortcomings of mutual identification and warning.

As a result, "tank losses on the first day exceeded our expectations": the 31st Tank Corps of General G.G. Kuznetsov lost a third, the 7th Guards Mechanized General I.P. Korchagin - a quarter of all his tanks. In Lelyushenko's tank army, "excessive losses of materiel" were also noted.

Konev ordered the army commanders to continue the offensive at night as well. The second echelons of regiments and divisions were brought into action.

The Germans began to withdraw from other sectors of the front and

to throw units of the 19th Panzer (48 tank self-propelled guns), the 20th Panzer (55 tanks and self-propelled guns), the 10th Panzer Grenadier (38 self-propelled guns) divisions, the 1st parachute-tank division "Hermann Goering", a brigade of assault guns.

Throughout the day of March 16, the formations of the shock groupings were engaged in intense battles with the counterattacking enemy troops. The weather improved, and the "Stalin's falcons" began to actively assist the ground troops.

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On the night of March 17, the northern grouping of the front crushed the opposing enemy troops and began a rapid advance on the city of Neisse, and part of the forces on Strehlen. The advanced units of the 10th Guards Tank Corps reached the Neisse River near the Rothaus by 6 o'clock and began forcing it on the move. In an effort to stop the advance of the Soviet troops, the enemy blew up the bridges, mined the approaches to the places of possible crossings, and opened the floodgates of the Ottmachau reservoir. The water level in the river rose to two meters. By evening, having built a pontoon bridge, the brigade of General E.E. Belova successfully overcame the water barrier and developed success on Neustadt, covering the enemy grouping in the Oppeln area from the southwest. At the same time, the 6th Guards Mechanized Corps, repelling counterattacks of the 0th Tank Grenadier and forward units of the 20th Tank Division, made its way to the city of Ottmachau. At the height of the battle, a message came from Moscow about the transformation of the 4th Tank Army into the Guards - "For the courage shown in the battles for the Fatherland, fortitude, courage, courage, discipline, organization and skillful performance of combat missions."

On the same day, the southern grouping of the front completed the breakthrough of the tactical zone and began to pursue the enemy troops.

By the evening of March 18, the 61st Guards Tank Brigade, Colonel V.I. Zaitseva took control of Neustadt. The brigade commander recalls that his "eagles" broke into the city center so suddenly, "THAT the sentry, who was on duty at the German commandant's office, began to demand a pass from our submachine gunners out of fright." The main forces of the 10th Guards Tank Corps went to the Sylz area, where they met with units of the 7th Guards Mechanized Corps. The 20th SS division (Estonian), the 168th and 344th infantry divisions, units of the 18th SS Panzer-Grenadier Division "Horst Wessel" found themselves in the "cauldron". Formations of the 43rd and 115th Rifle Corps of the 59th Army, advancing along the banks of the Oder, joined in the Kozel area and liquidated the Klodnitsa bridgehead.

On the way to Ottmachau, the 6th Guards Mechanized Corps captured the Stefensdorf road junction, but further

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the advance to the south-west was stopped by fierce counterattacks of the 20th Panzer and 1st Parachute-Tank Divisions. An enemy shell that exploded at the command post mortally wounded the commander of the mechanized corps, 29-year-old General V.F. Orlov,

the head of the reconnaissance department, Major Chernyshev, and the commander of the 17th Guards Mechanized Brigade, Lieutenant Colonel L.D. Churilov. Colonel V.I., Chief of Staff, took command of the corps. Koretsky. General Lelyushenko sent an army artillery brigade and a motorcycle battalion to help. The attacks of the 19th Panzer Division from the west were successfully repulsed by units of the 4th Guards Tank and 34th Guards Rifle Corps.

Against the southern grouping of the 1st Ukrainian Front, the 24th Panzer Corps of General Nering was advancing in the Leobshütz area, to which were subordinated the 16th and 17th Panzer, 78th Assault Divisions and the Fuhrer Escort division - one and a half hundred tanks and self-propelled guns.

At this time, part of the forces of the 4th Guards Tank, 21st and 59th armies continued to move to the west, pushing back and compacting the outer "bypass" of the encirclement. The rest of the formations from the morning of March 19 began to liquidate the encircled grouping. Marshal Konev, being at the command post of General Gusev, signed the order, which, in particular, said: "Before night, the emerging enemy groups should be destroyed, captured. To all sergeants and officers, boldly and boldly attack the enemy. Do not disgrace the troops of the 21st Army, the 4th Guards Tank Army and do not let the enemy out of the encirclement." However, thanks to

The fact that the commander of the 93rd Rifle Corps, General Ya.S. Sharaburko, "carried away by the attack on Neustadt, weakened his attention to his rear", units of the 344th Infantry Division and the 18th SS Division on the night of March 20, with a blow through the village of Rasewalts, managed to break through to the south. The rest of the encirclement was finished by March 22.

. According to Soviet data, the Germans lost about 30,000 people killed here, 15,000 were taken prisoner. General Nering had to urgently patch up another hole in the German defenses. The threat to the left wing of the front

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1st Ukrainian Front was basically eliminated. In addition, the forced transfer of tank troops to the Neisse region forced the German command to abandon the Breslau release plan. Soviet losses amounted to about 30 thousand people killed and wounded and 259 units of burnt armored vehicles.

Having completed the liquidation of the Oppeln grouping, the armies of Gusev and Lelyushenko on March 23 resumed their offensive in the general direction of the city of Neisse. Capturing the railway bridge across the river on the move, Soviet troops broke into the city and, after street fighting, by the end of March 24, completely captured another major junction of railways and highways. The troops of General Korovnikov and Kurochkin took Leobschutz on the same day, and General Zhadov took Strehlen on March 26.

At this time, the 60th Army was slowly, step by step, advancing on Ratibor. In order to speed up the advance of General Kurochkin's troops, the front commander decided to regroup formations of the 4th Guards Tank Army in this direction, which were to deliver a crushing blow to Troppau from the north. At the same time, the 6th Guards Mechanized Corps continued to perform the previous task, and the 5th Guards Mechanized Corps of Major General B.M. Skvortsova — 171 tanks and self-propelled guns: "An interesting detail is that there were many volunteer sailors of the Pacific Fleet in the corps who wished to fight the enemy on land warships. The reason is that former prisoners and conscripts from the occupied territories were not taken to tank troops, and there were few "Soviet people" who had not stained themselves with "contacts" with fascism and were fit for military service.

Already on the morning of March 24, Skvortsov's corps from the Leobshütz region launched an attack on Troppau, its success was to be developed by the 10th Guards Tank Corps, which was moving in the second echelon.

On the right, the 93rd separate tank brigade of Colonel A.A. attacked Yegerndorf. Dementieva,

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on the left to Biskau - the 22nd self-propelled artillery brigade of Lieutenant Colonel N.F. Korniyushkin.

And all the same, the offensive, from the point of view of the front commander, developed unsatisfactorily. The Germans resisted "fanatically", the 5th Guards Mechanized Corps covered only 3-4 kilometers on the first day and suffered heavy losses in people and armored vehicles:

"We continued to advance, but still very slowly. Day after day there were stubborn battles for the capture of small settlements, road junctions, heights and skyscrapers. The troops suffered heavy losses. This, of course, caused a feeling of dissatisfaction. The operation was clearly not proceeding in the same spirit, not at that pace, not at the level that we had the right to count on, based on our own experience, from our very recent military past.

To build up the blow to the left of the 5th Corps, the 10th Guards Tank Corps was brought into battle. But even the enemy "turned out to be at hand" the tank corps of Neringa, who used, according to the memoirs of V.I. Zaitsev, a tactical trick: "The enemy began to build anti-tank defenses on the reverse slopes, and as soon as our tanks reached the crest of the heights, the Germans hit them with anti-tank fire, which the tankers did not see. It was on such a defense that the 5th mechanized corps suffered heavy losses ... The tankers were embarrassed by the fact that they did not see who was firing and from where. This gave rise to a feeling of helplessness and insecurity... These grueling battles with a snail's advance exhausted the personnel both physically and mentally. Tankers are not accustomed to such battles... The bombing strike of our aviation, which partially hit the brigade's battle formations, became a big test for all of us.

On March 24, the troops of the 4th Ukrainian Front resumed their offensive. In the new direction, things went much better: even better, this was facilitated by the achieved surprise and "favorable weather conditions. On the first day, the corps of the 38th Army relatively quickly broke the enemy resistance, advanced up to 7 kilometers, captured 20 populated areas.

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settlements, including the town of Zorau, "a junction of seven highways and three railways," which covered the approaches to Moravska-Ostrava from the northeast. On the second day, the breakthrough was expanded along the front to 20 kilometers, and the depth of "penetration" reached 15 kilometers.

At this moment, to everyone's surprise, General Petrov was removed from his post with the wording: "For an attempt to deceive the Headquarters about the true position of the troops of the front, who were not fully ready for the offensive at the appointed time," which led to the disruption of the operation.

Petrov, one of the most talented military figures, did not have much luck with laurels in this war. Although he was the hero of the defense of Odessa, Sevastopol and the Caucasus and was considered the best specialist in mountain warfare in the Red Army, Ivan Efimovich did not fit well into the galaxy of "commanders of the Stalinist school". Comrade Stalin had some kind of internal prejudice towards Petrov. More than once he was removed and re-appointed to responsible positions, deprived and re-assigned military ranks; not for the first time he played a role in the fate of the general "man-axe" Mehlis. Even the shtafirka Simonov, who had seen many military leaders and had the opportunity to compare, Petrov seemed too tolerant for his chosen profession:

"For minutes when I watched him here, on the Fourth Ukrainian Front, it seemed to me that something was going wrong with him, and it didn't work out the way it should, not because he was not talented or smart, but because that he is not sharp, cruel and stubborn enough in the truest sense of these words to act in accordance with the cruel circumstances of the war.

It sometimes seemed to me that he spoke too softly to the officers at such moments when they did not deserve it; treats them too softly and nobly, appealing only to their reason and feelings, not showing tough mercilessness and exactingness, as others do.

It seemed that Petrov treated some of the officers and generals subordinate to him as he should have treated ideal officers and generals, who,

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maybe they will be brought up with us ten years after the war on the basis of all its experience.

Meanwhile, many of the people with whom he spoke, whom he commanded, were to a large extent a product of wartime, and they probably had to be treated based on the real, difficult life of the fourth year of the war, and not according to ideal standards of attitude towards an ideal officer and subordinate, as Petrov did. And co-

: tdaon did this, although his subordinates loved him for this, but at the same time in a number of cases for the same thing they respected him less than he deserved. So me at least a few times it seemed.

And perhaps his failures - of course, not all, because no matter who and whatever they say, military happiness plays a huge role in the war - but some part of his failures was determined by the nature of his attitude towards his subordinates. It also caused failures, and even a lower rate of advance of the troops than that which Petrov could have achieved by acting differently.

Nevertheless, he will write the textbook General Serpilin from Petrov.

On March 26, General of the Army A.I. Eremenko.

Until March 28, the troops of the 4th Ukrainian Front continued to move forward at an average daily rate of 4-5 kilos.

meters.

By its actions in the Moravian-Ostrava direction, the 38th Army created a threat of encirclement of the enemy in the area of Rybnik and Ratibor. At the same time, General Lelyushenko

He reinforced his tank fist with the 6th Guards Mechanized Corps, which transferred its sector to the infantry of the 21st Army. As a result, on March 27, the troops of the 60th Army captured the city of Rybnik, and on March 31, units of the 15th and 106th rifle corps, together with Kuznetsov's tankers, drove the Germans out of Ratibor ŷlotoshli in a southwestern direction. ' At this point, the Soviet offensive stalled. The 59th Army, which received the task, together with the 7th Mechanized Corps, to capture the city of Krnov and intercept

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the railway, could not complete the task: "The army began to be drawn into the foothills of the Sudetes, and although their height did not exceed 500 meters above sea level, the troops, accustomed to fighting on the plains, began to feel difficulties. The enemy used all the advantages of the gradually rising terrain, occupied the dominant heights, and created multi-tiered infantry, mortar and artillery fire on the approaches to them. In the intervals between the heights, barriers were created, covered with fire. On roads and especially mountain passes, ambushes were set up from tanks and self-propelled guns. All this held back the offensive of the army troops. In addition, "enemy troops fiercely resisted." In these battles, the 7th Guards Mechanized Corps was completely destroyed.

In the area of Resnitsa, the advance of the 4th Guards Tank Army was halted;

hope to repair. In three brigades of the 6th mechanized corps, 17 tanks remained in service.

The main forces of the armies of the left wing of the 1st Ukrainian Front reached the line of Strehlen, Neisse, Opava and went on the defensive. The tank troops were withdrawn to the reserve of the front.

The Upper Silesian operation ended with the defeat of five enemy divisions, and the rest of his forces were driven back to the foothills of the Sudetenland. In total, the enemy lost 60,000 soldiers and officers, of which about a third were taken prisoner. As trophies, 80 tanks and assault guns, 1,300 guns and mortars, 26 aircraft, 13,300 vehicles and many other military property were captured. The losses of Marshal Konev's troops up to March 31 - the official end date of the operation, although the history of the 59th Army says that "active hostilities continued until April 6" - amounted to 67 thousand people killed and wounded.

The armies of the 4th Ukrainian Front in the direction of the main attack by the end of March were stuck 20 kilometers from Moravsk-Ostrava and did not achieve their goal.

The enemy relied here on long-term structures

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fortified areas - a variant of the Maginot Line - erected by the Czechoslovak government in the 20-30s on the borders with Germany and Poland, along the rivers Odra, Ostravica, Olsha:

"Each line was a system of powerful pillboxes located in two, and on separate lines in three and four lines with intervals between the pillboxes from 150 to 700 m. The second and subsequent lines were at a distance of 250-600 m from the first. Pillboxes, in terms of the quality of construction and the power of weapons, belonged to the type of first-class structures.

By their design, they were reinforced concrete cannon-machine-gun caponiers and machine-gun semi-caponiers and had from 2 to 9 embrasures.

A characteristic feature of the location of pillboxes on the ground was the absence of embrasures in the floor wall. The embrasures were located on the sides and in the rear wall with the expectation of conducting flank and rear fire. At the same time, it was possible to completely view the gap between two adjacent pillboxes and the approaches to the exits from them from the embrasure of each structure. The location of the pillboxes was made taking into account the surrounding area and made it possible to fire at all hollows and heights.

The system of pillboxes at the forefront and in depth created

, multi-layered artillery and machine-gun fire and tightly covered the approaches to fortifications. The pillboxes were well camouflaged from ground and air observation: the walls were covered with earth from the floor side, and from the rear with camouflage nets. . At sides were masked by bushes and 75-100m in front of the pillboxes, counterscarps with reinforced concrete supporting walls were built. Their continuation. served as gouges on a concrete foundation.

; The standard armament after Munich, of course, was dismantled. But from the beginning of 1945, the Germans supplemented this E Fortification splendor with field-type structures and engineering barriers.

R. Realizing the importance of the Moravsk-Ostrava industrial region, the German command sent the 16th, 19th, 8th tank, 10th tank-grenadier divisions to its defense, and additionally transferred the 715th infantry division from Italy.

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As General Moskalenko recalls:

"We had a chance to break through such a long-term defense for the first time. I will add: later, when I got acquainted in detail with the combat operations of our troops on other fronts, I found out that during the years of the war with fascist Germany, it was necessary to break through a powerful long-term defense in only three sectors. One of them was the Karelian Isthmus, the other was the border of East Prussia, the third was the Moravska-Ostrava region, on the threshold of which our 38th Army stood in the early spring of 1945. Perhaps this list is not complete, but it is hardly possible to increase it much".

On the left wing, the 18th Army on April 4-5 captured the cities of Liptovsky Mikulas and Ruzomberok - the Germans, having shot for the sake of appearance, left them practically without a fight and, having blown up the bridges on the Vah River, retreated to Bolshaya Fatra.

On April 4, the government of the National Front of Czechs and Slovaks was formed in the city of Kosice. Zdeněk Firlinger, the former ambassador of Czechoslovakia to the Soviet Union, became its chairman. The communist Klement Gottwald became deputy chairman, and Ludwig Svoboda became the minister of national defense. Instead, the commander of the 3rd Infantry Brigade, General Karel Klapalek, was placed at the head of the Czechoslovak Corps.

The fighting in the zone of the 4th Ukrainian Front, which lost about 50 thousand killed and wounded in three weeks of fighting, froze until mid-April.

And what's interesting. In the course of preparing a new offensive in the Moravian-Ostrava direction, which was supposed to begin on April 15, General Eremenko "established incomplete readiness", which was expressed in the absence of artillery ammunition necessary for a breakthrough, and asked to postpone the start of the operation for six days. However, the Headquarters refused him "extra time" and demanded to start the offensive exactly on time. As a result, it took sixteen days to overcome the 20 kilometers to Ostrava with a gradual gnaw through of the "reinforced concrete belts", and the losses amounted to another 50 thousand people.

So what was General Petrov to blame for?

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EAST PRUSIAN OPERATION (continued)

Preparations for the assault on Königsberg began in early March. It was carried out under the direct supervision of the headquarters of the Zemland Group of Forces, commanded by General I.Kh. Bagramyan. On March 16, the commander of the troops of the 3rd Belorussian Front, Marshal A.M. Vasilevsky presented to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief a plan to defeat the Königsberg grouping of the enemy. On March 20, Bagramyan issued instructions "to break through the Königsberg fortified area and storm the city of Königsberg."

The liquidation of the enemy in the Heilsberg fortified area made it possible to release additional forces and means near Königsberg. At the same time, a number of organizational measures were taken. C | April Headquarters disbanded the 2nd Baltic Front. Part of its troops - the 4th shock, 22nd army and 19th tank corps - was withdrawn to the reserve, and the command and the remaining formations were reassigned to the Leningrad Front. The 50th, 2nd Guards and 5th Armies of the 3rd Belorussian Front were transferred to the Zemland Peninsula to participate in the upcoming assault; The 31st, 28th and 3rd armies were withdrawn to the reserve of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command.

As a result, six armies with 18 rifle corps were concentrated on the 80-kilometer front. They covered Königsberg in a semicircle, and on the right wing they deeply protruded into the Samland Peninsula. Taking into account the increased opportunities, one fundamental change was made to the plans: first of all, it was decided to take Königsberg. dream

Vasilevsky was to bring the number of rifle divisions to 3000-3600 by the beginning of the assault lovek.

From Zaprel, the Stavka withdrew the administration and headquarters of the Zemland Group of Forces to the reserve and subordinated all forces to Marshal

A.M. Vasilevsky. General Baghramyan was appointed deputy commander of the front.

A well-entrenched enemy grouping at the beginning of April was a fairly serious force.

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From the northern coast of the Zemland Peninsula to Warengen, there were positions of the 9th Army Corps of General Rolf Wüttmann - the 93rd, 95th Infantry, 551st People's Grenadier Divisions. The corridor to Königsberg was held by the 58th and | th Infantry Divisions, which were part of the 26th Army Corps of General Gerhard Matzki.

The garrison of Koenigsberg under the command of Otto von Lyash consisted of units of the 61st, 69th, 367th Infantry, 548th, 561st People's Grenadier Divisions, the police group of Major General Schubert (two regiments), several separate regiments, fortress and security formations, a company of assault guns (20 "shtuggs"), as well as eight battalions of the Volkssturm. According to Soviet data, they numbered 128,000 people, up to 4,000 guns and mortars, and 108 armored units. However, General Lyudnikov, who commanded the 39th Army, estimated the strength of the garrison at just over 100 thousand soldiers and officers, 850 guns and 60 tanks. Commander-43, General Beloborodov, indicated in an April report that "the total number of the garrison of the Koenigsberg fortress" was 60 thousand people. General Lyash after the war even claimed that by the beginning of the assault he had no more than 30-35 thousand "defenders". True, he himself described in detail how through the headquarters for the formation of troops, which knocked together units from scattered units and stray soldiers, about 30 thousand people were sent to the front line, "who received everything they needed from the arsenal." In many cases, the remnants of previously defeated units independently merged into active units. In addition, "in the second half of March, when there were interruptions in the supply of machine guns and means of communication, the headquarters for the formation of troops also sent several marching battalions equipped with only handguns to replenish combat units, as a result, these units were able to to COMPLETE their units, sometimes even beyond the staffing table. On the other hand, it should be taken into account that the two most combat-ready divisions, the 1st Infantry and 5th Tank Divisions, as well as the 232nd Assault Gun Brigade, were taken away from the city. Well, apparently, the militias and the armed

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Lyash did not consider birdmen, railroad workers, and customs officers to be "active bayonets." According to Colonel Heinrich Janus, "the Volkssturm, as a military force, has not justified itself, the German military command does not take into account the formation of the Volkssturm, also because the Volkssturm is subordinated not to the military, but to the political leadership." So, after all, in the Soviet Russian statistics, the personnel of divisions of the people's militia, partisan regiments and brigades, extermination battalions, police detachments, paramilitary guards or the Defense Construction Directorate are treated as civilians exterminated by the Nazis. In general, one gets the impression that no one knows exactly how many troops were in Königsberg. The army reserve of the Zemland group included the 5th tank division (85 tanks and 27 assault guns), the 511th and 505th heavy tank battalions (28 tigers) and the 10th scooter brigade. In the Pillau region, the 55th Army Corps was hastily restored - the 50th, 286th Infantry, 558th Nafto-Grenadier, 13th Anti-Aircraft Divisions. On the Fri Zie-Nerung Spit were the remnants of the 129th and 170th Infantry Divisions, consolidated into the 6th Army Corps. The total strength of the German grouping was estimated by intelligence at 200-240 thousand people. 155 aircraft were based at the airfields of the Zemland Peninsula, including 9

fighters. The German fleet, which dominated Balyak, provided fire for the coastal direction, supplying the ground forces, evacuating the wounded and the sea NCEs. General Müller burned with the desire to wholeheartedly fulfill the orders of the Führer and exuded confidence in the coming victorious offensive of the Wehrmacht, as a result of which the Russians | expelled from East Prussia; only need a day

_ The backbone of the Königsberg defense system, which consisted of

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three positions, intermediate and cut-off lines, and fortifications of the city, were reinforced concrete long-term structures, external and internal forts and numerous shelters, supplemented by developed field fortifications.

The outer contour and the first position with a total length of 53 kilometers each had two or three trenches with communication passages and shelters for personnel. At 6–8 kilometers east of the fortress, they merged into one defensive line — six or seven trenches with numerous communication passages along the entire 15-kilometer section.

In this position, there were | 5 forts built in 1874-1882. Each fort was surrounded by a moat, prepared for all-round defense and was a small fortress with a garrison of 250-300 people. Brickwork three or four meters thick and an earthen cushion protected the fort from direct hits even by twelve-inch shells. "At the same time," notes the former artillery commander, General N.M. Khlebnikov, — the analysis of intelligence data showed that the forts of the Königsberg fortress had a number of shortcomings, which we had to use during the assault. The main of these shortcomings: 1. The low location of the embrasures allowed the garrison to fire only at close targets. For firing at distant targets, fire weapons had to be brought to the surface of the fort, where they fell under the fire of our artillery. 2. Forts had one rear entrance. Therefore, flooding it with heavy artillery fire or undermining it by sappers led to the complete isolation of the fort garrison."

The garrisons of the forts were staffed with izlits, unsuitable for military service due to health reasons and therefore were called "gastric battalions", which, however, did not prevent them from fighting, and very stubbornly. Between the forts there were up to 60 pillboxes and bunkers. The first position was covered by an anti-tank ditch 6-8 meters wide and 3 meters deep, scarps and anti-tank gouges, barbed wire and minefields.

A second position ran along the outskirts of the city, including stone buildings surrounded by trenches, barricades,

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reinforced concrete firing points. Greta position covered the central part of the city, having fortifications of the old construction. The cellars of large brick buildings were connected by underground passages, and their ventilation windows were adapted for loopholes. Many houses were mined, and land mines were placed at intersections. The air defense of the fortress was entrusted to the 18th anti-aircraft division, which was armed with over 300 anti-aircraft guns.

The March respite was used by the garrison command to carry out a number of organizational measures, improve positions, replenish units with personnel, and accumulate supplies. If possible, they tried to evacuate the civilian population, although there were not enough ships for this. In addition, after rumors about the sinking of the Gustlov and Steuben, people were afraid to board large transport ships. Many refugees preferred the vicissitudes of a sea voyage to return from the "waiting barracks" in Pillau and Peise back to their homes, where food, electricity and water were available. About 130 thousand inhabitants remained in the city, who were involved in defensive and repair work, the production of military

equipment: "Everyone lived and worked with one thought - to keep Königsberg until the fortress was rescued from the blockade, as we were promised all the time, or until the liberation of Danzig came if the war ended through negotiations."

A". The commander of the 3rd Belorussian Front decided to cut off and defeat the garrison of Königsberg by "rapid" counter attacks of the 43rd and 50th armies from the north and the 11th Guards Army from the south and capture the city by the end of the third day. It is interesting that initially, according to the plan drawn up by Bagramyan's headquarters, the main attack in the northern sector of Ya Yulzhna was to be delivered by the 39th Army, but Marshal Vasilevsky ordered to regroup and entrust the "honorable, but incredibly difficult mission" to General Beloborodov :

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th strike to put the 43rd army. I was somewhat surprised by this decision: after all, the 39th was already on the northwestern approaches to Königsberg, and the 43rd had to be transferred from the right wing of the front to the center. Naturally, I expressed my doubts as to whether such a regrouping was justified. After all, the 39th Army showed itself well in all previous offensive operations. About I.I. Lyudnikov, as far as I knew, A.M. Vasilevsky was of the highest opinion. So what's the deal?

"When preparing an assault," the marshal explained, "we must take into account the slightest psychological nuances. Do you remember what happened on the nineteenth of February?

I understood that Alexander Mikhailovich recalls the unfortunate failure of the 39th Army, whose troops could not prevent the Königsberg garrison from linking up with the grouping of troops on the Zemland Peninsula, and confirmed:

— Yes, of course, I remember.

- I think that in the thirty-ninth this failure was not forgotten. And, of course, it must be taken into account that after this, the army remained somewhat uncertain about its combat capabilities. Troops forty-third such a failure, fortunately, did not have to endure. That is why I decided to give her the main role in the assault on Königsberg along with the Eleventh Guards."

General Lyash, speaking about the February "failure" of the 39th Army, argued that, having burst into the sleeping Metingen, the Russians were too carried away by "collecting trophies". Soviet historians categorically denied the very possibility of such deeds being committed by "liberator soldiers". The current generation of Russian researchers boldly admits that such excesses could sometimes take place in some places, although for our army this is still an atypical phenomenon: "It seems that, being in a stressful situation in the depths of a dangerous breakthrough, behind the enemy, Soviet least of all they thought of this method of detente as robbery... But, of course, we took something from the abandoned houses: food, some things for equipment and insulation of hastily built dugouts. valuable little things. The soldiers of any army would do the same."

No, it's not at all about the "valuable little things" that migrated from

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burgher buffet into a soldier's "sidor", and the fact that the war of extermination did not stop for a moment. All around was enemy land, the "land of villains", on which "non-humans" bred (after all, "we know that the Germans have no soul", the Germans are "a mixture of sheep and parrots"), from generation to generation only about that and who dreamed of how to enslave a peaceful and trusting Slav. The time has come to answer. "Soviet soldiers overtook the descendants of the "dog-knights" in their vile robber den," Bagramyan writes, listing all the historical insults inflicted on him by "insatiable Prussians." "It is not surprising that the very name of this region was hateful for us..."

"For the suffering of the people, kill the fascist freak."

The German command, which scrupulously documented all cases of violation of international law on German territory and even compiled a list of "enemy war criminals", once again became convinced that "Soviet people are strict judges":

"At the beginning of February 1945, Soviet troops unexpectedly broke into the western part of Zemland, capturing a large number of settlements. A few days later, the Germans succeeded in breaking up and partially driving back the advanced forces and, in the course of a bold offensive operation on a large scale on February 19 and 20, 1945, restored the interrupted land and sea

Russian connection with Koenigsberg.

The command of the Zemland Army Group and the North Army Group, with the help of the police, carried out investigations into the fate of the population in the newly liberated territory, the results of which are available, however, only for a few allotted points. Thus, servicemen of the 271st Special Motorized Battalion (motorcyclists) of the 39th Army killed 4 civilians in Georgenwald and threw Mrupa into the flames of a set fire to the estate. Officers and their red- ``Noarmy men brutally desecrated women and girls. In Kragau, servicemen of the 91st Guards Rifle Division raped and strangled two young women; in Medenau, servicemen of the 358th Rifle Division killed at least 1 | civilians. Here in front of a house

G.

And,

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VZAEKH

the corpses of two murdered women, a small child and an infant were reaped. Two elderly men and a 14-year-old boy were beaten, in the same way - two women and two girls after being raped. The completely naked body of a woman in her thirties had stab wounds on her chest, her skull was cut open, and she was riddled with gunshots. In Gross-Ladtkaim, servicemen of the 91st Guards Rifle Division shot 2 German prisoners of war and 4 civilians, including the burgomaster and his wife. No trace of their 18-year-old daughter remains. However, the corpse of a young girl was found, whose breasts were cut off and her eyes gouged out after being raped.

The Soviet 91st Guards Rifle Division, which broke through the Tyrenberg to the Krattlau-Germau region, was surrounded on February 7, 1945 and partially defeated in heavy fighting. Gross violations of international law were established in the settlements it captured. In Tirenberg, 21 German soldiers were killed, driven there from a shelter for military invalids near Sorgenau. Elisabeth Homfeld was raped and, along with her son-in-law, shot in the head, just like Minna Kottke, who tried to resist the rape, and the son of the tenant of the priest's estate, Ernst Trunz. A grenade thrown into the barn killed three women and a man who were locked there, and several people were seriously injured. At the same time, Soviet officers and soldiers later admitted in captivity that they continuously and "brutally" raped women and even underage girls. In Krathglau, servicemen of the 275th Guards Rifle Regiment of the 91st Guards Rifle Division killed 6 men and two German soldiers with bayonet strikes or shots in the head. All women and girls, including 13-year-olds, were continuously raped, some women "were subjected to sexual violence by 6-8 soldiers 5-8 times a day". 3-4, the youngest women were left to the officers, who, after the completion of the criminal violence, handed them over to their subordinates. In Annenthal, the German liberators found the bodies of two women, who were defiled (one on a dunghill) and then

strangled.

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Detailed investigations were carried out in Germau, where, after all, the headquarters of the 91st Guards Rifle Division and the headquarters with units of the 275th Guards Rifle Regiment were located. In Germau, the bodies of 21 murdered men, women and children were found. 11 people could not stand the monstrous torture and committed suicide themselves. 15 German wounded were killed by breaking their heads, and one of them was forcibly stuffed into his mouth with a harmonica. According to the conclusion of the captain of the medical service, Dr. Goltzien, one female body had the following wounds: a through shot in the head, a crush of the left shin, a wide open cut wound on the inside of the left shin, a large open wound on the outside of the left thigh, inflicted with a knife. The other woman, like the undressed young girl, had the back of her head crushed. The murdered were the Retkowski couple, the Sprengel couple with 3 children, a young woman with 2 children, and an unknown Pole. In a common grave lay the bodies of an unknown refugee, Rosa Thiel, née Witte, and a 21-year-old Polish girl - all three were brutally murdered after being raped, then the bodies of two local handicraftsmen, one of whom, the miller Magun, was shot dead because he tried to protect his young daughter from being raped. Near the Germau-Palmnikken (now Yantarny, Russia) road, near a 5-kilometer marker, two girls were found. Both were shot in the head at close range, one had its eyes gouged out. The female population of Germau, about 400 women and girls, by order of the commander of the 91st Guards Rifle Division, Colonel Kozhanov, was locked in the church, allegedly (so, in any case, the prisoner of war Major Kostikov claimed) to protect them from atrocities. Nevertheless, Soviet officers and soldiers broke into the church and carried out "mass rapes" in the choir stalls. And in the surrounding houses in the following days, women were continuously raped, mostly by officers, young girls - up to 22 times a night; an officer and several Red Army soldiers raped 13-year-old Eva Link 8 times in the church bell tower in front of a desperate mother, who then suffered the same fate.

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Events in the resort suburb of Metgeten, located west of Königsberg, which on the night of January 31, 1945 was captured by units of the Soviet 39th Army (192, 292, 338th rifle regiments), and on February 19, after bloody battles, was again liberated by units of the German The 1st Infantry Division, the 561st People's Grenadier Division and the 5th Panzer Division have already been described in the literature more than once, and recently in the publication of the Russian journal *Novoye Vremya* under the heading "Crime of the Red Army Men". In this regard, the American specialist in international law, Alfred M. de Zayas, should be mentioned, who in his research pays special attention to the events in Metgeten. German soldiers made terrifying discoveries in Metgeten and its immediate vicinity. The survivors (for example, the former 3rd staff officer in the headquarters of the commandant of the Königsberg fortress, reserve major Professor Dr. G. Ipsen) were "in a state bordering on insanity".

Already on the approaches, the corpses of several hundred German soldiers were found, partly mutilated beyond recognition, in almost all houses and gardens there were dead men, women and children, women had obvious signs of rape, often their breasts were cut off. In one place, as reported by the former officer for assignments at the headquarters of the 561st division of people's grenadiers K.A. Knorr, two approximately 20-year-old girls were torn apart by cars. There was at least one train with refugees from Königsberg standing in the hall. In each carriage lay the bodies of "brutally murdered refugees of every age and sex." The tennis court at Metgeten was packed to capacity with German prisoners of war and civilians, and then an explosive charge was set off. Parts of human bodies were already found 200 meters from the giant explosive funnel. As early as February 27, 1945, the captain from the headquarters of the commandant of the fortress Sommer accidentally discovered behind one house in a gravel pit at the street and road intersection in front of Metgeten the corpses of 12 completely undressed women and children, lying together in a "messy pile"; they were torn to pieces by blows of bayonets and knives.

In addition to individual corpses scattered throughout the resort-

In the village, which numbered hundreds, several large earthen hills were discovered, under which, as it turned out, hundreds (according to Captain Sommer and Professor Dr. Ipsen - 3000) of the dead were buried. The investigation of the commission of inquiry appointed by the commandant of the fortress, General of the Infantry Lasch, was complicated, as the Soviets doused the heaps of corpses with gasoline and tried to burn them. Nevertheless, it was possible to establish that most of the victims were not shot, but were often brutally killed with slashing and stabbing weapons. In addition, a significant part of those killed were not Germans, but Ukrainian refugees, of whom there were about 25,000 near Metgethen, as well as members of the so-called Ukrainian "labor service", who were forcibly mobilized (who were mistreated by the Germans) and now, like many of their fellow tribesmen elsewhere, fell victim to the Soviet

, acts of retribution. To the west of Metgethen, as Captain Sommer reported, the ^{before-} corpses of civilians "Persons killed by shots in the back of the head, or "absolutely | stripped, raped and then brutally killed by blows of bayonets or rifle butts.

(Pavel Zolotov recalls how a year earlier, in liberated Zhytomyr, five officers of a mortar regiment went to visit local young ladies to relax, drink beer, and ask about "torments under the fascist yoke":

"They started a gramophone, the young people went to dance, one did not

, Walked. I began to carefully ask how it was, how the Germans , were able to protect themselves from the Germans, how many raped the girls...

th - All the girls, probably, were afraid to show themselves to the Germans.

And they are all beautiful, - I point to the dancers, -

a great temptation for the Germans.

. Tutona says:

y - No, the Germans did not rush at our girls, on the contrary,

\$ 'Napti girls rushed at the Germans.

And - so-so!

. —^ W:

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so many gathered in front of the club that the soldiers dispersed them by force. Everyone aspired to get into the club, but they invited few people. And they were strictly forbidden to live with our girls, and they were afraid of it. And which girls secretly managed to live with which officer, everyone envied that one, and she behaved like a queen: our men do not know how to love and respect like the Germans.

"So there was no violence against women?"

"I don't know, but it was hardly in the city. Everyone would know, everyone here knew everything. Yes, and judge for yourself, why rape when they themselves ask for it in dozens. And as for the hunger strike, there was a shortage of food, but I don't know who was starving, we didn't have that all around.

All this did not fit in so well with our propaganda and so contradicted our reality that it acted like a tub of cold water after a hangover on my head. In our unoccupied territory, people were starving everywhere, everyone was yellow, emaciated, millions died of starvation, but here they never heard of a hunger strike. There is something to think about."

(Such "anti-Soviet" thoughtfulness cost the senior lieutenant eight years in prison.)

According to the April decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Council, Guard Colonel V.I. Kozhanov - Hero of the Soviet Union. From the point of view of modern German historians, he is a war criminal. Both are the truth of those days that combined military prowess and bloody revenge, terrible murders and unparalleled feats, the triumph of the victors and the grief of the vanquished.

How does the tragedy of Germau and Metgethen differ, for example, from the tragedy of Khatyn? From a military point of view, one important detail is that the Wehrmacht has nothing to do with the Belarusian village.

It seems that the "psychological nuance" of Vasilevsky was that Lyudnikov's troops had decayed in order. Therefore, the 39th Army, having moved to the right, had to advance to the south to reach the Kurishes-Haff Bay to the mouth of the Pregel River, in order to cut the neck connecting Königsberg with Pillau. The 48th army of General Gusev took up defenses on the coast of the Frisches-Haff Bay from Brandenburg to Elbing.

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137,000 people, 5200 guns and mortars (47% were "big guns"), 300 rocket artillery combat vehicles, 125 tanks and 413 self-propelled artillery installations were directly involved in the Königsberg operation. The troops of the 2nd Guards and 5th Armies - 18 divisions and almost 2,000 guns - were to conduct an offensive against the Zemland grouping, protecting the front from attacks from the northwest.

For air support, the 18th Air Armies, part of the aviation of the Baltic Fleet, as well as for the bomber corps from the 4th and 15th Air Armies - a total of 2500 combat aircraft, including 1124 bombs - barter, 470 attack aircraft, 830 fighters. Their actions were coordinated by a task force led by Air Marshal A.A. Novikova: "Thus, one of the largest air operations was planned in the area of Königsberg. And I cannot but note with admiration that it was brilliantly planned. The study of the plan for the combat use of aviation in preparation for the assault on Königsberg and in the course of it gave deep satisfaction. We all thought then about how the incredibly difficult task of the ground forces would be facilitated if this grandiose plan could be fully implemented.

Submarines, torpedo boats of the Baltic Fleet, as well as a division of armored boats under the command of Captain 2nd Rank M.F. Krokhin, transferred by rail to the Pregel River, were preparing to solve the problems of isolating the Königsberg garrison and preventing its evacuation by sea. The naval aviation was given the task of

"to defeat the ship groups of the enemy, or at least

— <

At the very least, force them to leave the Danzig bay.

From the reserve of the Headquarters, eight separate units were transferred to the front

„. New artillery battalions are large and especially powerful

sti (six guns each), armed with howitzers and Y

With mortars of caliber 203, 280 and 305 mm, 5th artillery "breakthrough corps", 10th and 15th The breakthrough divisions. , 'Guards artillery grouping also included the 4th cannon and 2nd separate mortar division, eight fighter

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anti-tank brigades and five anti-aircraft artillery divisions. Naval comrades brought in the 1st Guards Krasnoselskaya Naval Railway Brigade, the 404th Naval Railway Battalion, equipped with 1 [30-mm and 180-mm guns with a firing range of up to 34 kilometers, and two heavy cannon artillery regiments. Due to this, a long-range artillery group, an artillery blockade group of the Königsberg area, and an impact group for land and sea communications and important objects behind enemy lines were created on the scale of the front. In the armies in the breakthrough areas, the density of artillery ranged from 180 to 250 barrels per kilometer, and each army was assigned an assault engineer-sapper brigade. The rifle corps had strong demolition groups with 152-280 mm guns.

The advantage in military equipment was colossal, especially considering that Soviet artillery systems usually took into account from 76-mm and above, the enemy's weapons - up to 37-mm guns and 50-mm mortars.

One of the German regimental commanders recalled: "After the capture, we were led, most likely on purpose, through the Russian positions. My surprise knew no bounds. I have never seen such a concentration of artillery. One gun next to another, battery after battery of different calibers. Weight of ammunition. The tanks stand side by side, one "Stalinist organ" next to the other."

As for the correlation of forces in the personnel, there are big doubts about the generally accepted figures. For example, it is hard to believe that 36 Soviet divisions, even though they suffered significant losses, were equal in number, roughly speaking, to six beaten German ones. But that's not even the point. All our sources indicate that the 43rd, 50th, 39th and 11th Guards Armies, preparing for the assault on Königsberg, numbered over 137 thousand people, and it is especially emphasized that "Soviet troops did not outnumber the enemy in infantry" . Since Lyudnikov's nine divisions did not take part in the assault, it turns out that not only "didn't exceed", but, on the contrary, the enemy defended the city significantly

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superior forces. Moreover, he defended steadfastly and, as General Galitsky (and not only him) claims, on impregnable lines: "During the entire war, we have not yet seen such fortifications as were created in Königsberg. In fact, it was the largest fortified area, designed for long-term resistance even in conditions of complete isolation. If it had been so, then Vasilevsky would have been busy with Königsberg to the point of a carrot charm. Some of the opponents were clearly "miscalculated".

In order to maximize the use of forces and means during the delivery of the first crushing blow, the operational formation of the armies was planned to be in one echelon, the combat formations of formations and units, as a rule, were built in two echelons. Strong assault groups and detachments were preparing for operations in the city in divisions. They were also saturated to the limit with artillery, up to heavy calibers, and units of engineering troops. An assault detachment usually consisted of a rifle battalion with mortar and machine-gun companies, a platoon or company of sappers, a flamethrower platoon, a company of tanks or self-propelled guns. The detachment was given batteries of left guns or howitzers, separate 152-mm and 203-mm guns and 160-mm mortars. Rifle platoons of assault detachments and groups were armed with anti-tank grenades, smoke bombs, "cats" with ropes for undermining tension mines, scissors, axes, thermal balls with a combustible mixture. Each fighter of the group had six grenades.

In March, intensive training began: units trained to overcome defensive structures, storm forts and pillboxes, force ditches, canals, climb

sheer walls, suppress firing points. The divisions were equipped with training fields that recreated the positions of the enemy in the zone of the upcoming breakthrough. The street fighting technique was practiced in the settlements left by the inhabitants. Assault detachments, consisting of representatives of various branches of the armed forces, were put together into a single combat organism according to a specially developed program. During this time, the number of rifle divisions was brought up to 4,500 people.

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The start date of the operation was set on March 28, then, due to adverse weather conditions, it was postponed to April, but on this day the weather was even more disgusting, making it completely impossible to use the Soviet air armada.

"Marshal A.M. Vasilevsky was, as always, imperturbable in appearance, - recalls Bagramyan, - but I felt that he was holding back his annoyance: after all, the time had come to begin preliminary artillery and aviation preparations for the assault, and the weather, as luck would have it, interfered. Since mid-March, it has been raining interspersed with sleet. The terrain was so muddy that it was only possible to move on paved roads. But the rains and fogs were especially tormenting. Visibility is the worst, so the conditions for controlling artillery fire were extremely difficult, and it was almost impossible to raise combat aircraft into the air. Since nature had buried our hopes of using our enormous superiority in aviation in preparation for the assault, the scrupulously worked out plan for the combat use of the Air Force remained in vain. Even artillery could not be used with sufficient efficiency.

A.M. Vasilevsky called the Supreme Commander-in-Chief and reported the situation to him.

"The Supreme Commander is in a hurry," the marshal remarked with undisguised chagrin after finishing his conversation with Stalin. "The Berlin operation is running out..." Looking out the window at the curtain of drizzling rain and dense clouds hanging low over the muddy ground, he resolutely concluded: "We must start."

Koenigsberg was supposed to fall before Germany capitulates, in vain General Lyash hoped for "liberation if the war ended by negotiations."

The assault was immediately preceded by a four-day period of destruction of long-term engineering structures, which began on the morning of April 2. One day was allotted for fire reconnaissance and identification of targets. It involved mainly light artillery, which had the task of cutting off the earthen cushion from the forts and pillboxes with their fire, determining their strength and the presence of concrete in the fire cover.

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tee: "Explosions with characteristic gray smoke confirmed that the shells were exploding on the concrete pavement, red smoke indicated an explosion on the brickwork." In the next three days, for 5-6 hours a day, artillery of great and special power worked for the destruction. Campaign projectiles filled with leaflets with a proposal to lay down arms and surrender were periodically fired. Railway batteries operated on land communications and rear facilities, and also kept the Königsberg Sea Canal at gunpoint. The fire was corrected by the 206th separate air regiment and the 8th aeronautical artillery observation battalion. In the intervals between shelling, propaganda installations reported to the garrison reports from the Soviet Information Bureau. On April 3, the pilot of the 6th Guards Attack Aviation Regiment, Senior Lieutenant Pyotr Shakhov, dropped an ultimatum to the commandant of Königsberg on the city. It is not known whether Lyash read it, in any case, there was no answer from him.

A special commission created after the end of the operation noted the high accuracy and efficiency of firing at reinforced concrete structures, which were destroyed as a result of 2-6 hits. However, the ancient forts proved to be a tough nut to crack. As General Beloborodov notes, their shelling did not give the desired effect: "The fire of 280-mm and 211-mm (captured

German) mortar was very well-aimed, forts No. 5 "Charlottenburg" and No. 5a "Lindorf" received ninety direct hits each, but, as recorded in the documents, "only partially destroyed." Explicit holes and breaks were isolated. Specifically, in the ceiling of Fort No. 5, the commission found two through holes. More than 100 direct hits were made in Fort No. 4, through holes - 9.

In the zone of the 11th Guards Army there were three divisions of 305-mm howitzers mod. 1915 - it seems that this was the only combat episode in their biography - but the fire of the twelve-inch guns was not much more effective: "189 shells of 305-mm caliber were fired at Fort No. 10, of which 172 the right side of the fort; name

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There was one through hole in the combat cover, the right semi-caponier was destroyed. At Fort No. 8, the same artillery fired 360 shells. 346 hit the target, mainly in the central caponier and the left semi-caponier. Five through holes were found in the central caponier, 12 holes in the left semi-caponier, both courtyards were destroyed, cracks appeared in the central entrance".

General M.N. Khlebnikov: "As we were able to establish, through holes were mostly obtained when the projectile hit a second time in a place where the combat coating was already partially destroyed, that is, in a funnel formed by the rupture of the previous projectile."

Nevertheless, artillery of special power inflicted serious damage on the fort garrisons and significantly helped the assault detachments.

Aviators in the preparatory period were supposed to make 5316 sorties, but due to adverse weather, the plan was not fulfilled. On April 4 and 5, they made only 766 sorties, most of them were U-2 nightlights. Of the forty long-range bombers of the 18th Army, which went on a raid on Königsberg on April 5, only 15 aircraft reached the city, and the rest got lost in the ROAD.

Therefore, for example, in the 3rd Air Army, April 5 was made a political day: they held rallies, party and Komsomol meetings, "at which the communists and Komsomol members said that they would spare no effort and life itself for the final defeating the enemy in the city-fortress. We read the latest articles by Ehrenburg and Velichko:

"Königsberg has become a threat to the whole world. It is a springboard for German barbarism"... "Stupid Königsbergers grew fat on their blood-soaked wealth"... "We took Königsberg by the throat"... "The Germans, like moles, dug in cellars, catacombs, under the ruins and just in the pipes ... "Königsberg looked at the face of the Red Army and found out what was written on it. Now the city whines and staggers from side to side ... "We broke into their reserve. Here, just yesterday, the Prussians tormented Soviet girls. And the retribution has come: no

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in heaven — on their land"... "One cannot sympathize with a wild beast, it must be destroyed"...

Ground troops at that time occupied the initial areas, compacted battle formations. In the north, in the direction of the main attack, in a 10-kilometer zone, against fifteen battalions of the 548th and 561st people's grenadier divisions, [5 rifle divisions of the 43rd and 50th armies, 2327 guns and mortars, 234 tanks and self-propelled guns. In the south, on an 8.5-kilometer stretch, against the positions of the 69th Infantry Division of Colonel Kasper Völker, reinforced by three infantry regiments and Volkssturm battalions, lined up in two echelons of 9 rifle divisions | 1st Guards Army with 1511 guns and mortars, 198 tanks and self-propelled guns. Under the roar of cannonade, sappers made passages in minefields, rifle battalions carried out reconnaissance in force. And here tireless political workers organized rallies and found time to reach out to the heart of each fighter: "The political work carried out in the units of the 235th

division, was intended to instill hatred for the enemy. For this, materials of the Extraordinary State Commission for establishing and investigating the atrocities of the Nazi invaders, stories of soldiers and commanders, and letters from relatives from the territory liberated from the Germans were used.

The preparations did not go unnoticed by the enemy, the city was expecting an assault from day to day: "In the intercepted radiograms, the Russian commanders agreed among themselves to meet in Königsberg. concentration of Russians

The troops proceeded without any interference and were almost not camouflaged. German aviation was no longer able to conduct combat operations for some time. The enemy tanks crossed the terrain without hindrance, although the distance allowed them to be fired upon, and the Russian infantry calmly occupied the starting positions

„tion. In the past, having guessed the enemy's offensive, we

Lech used the tactics of pushing our front

,Edge of defense, as a result of which the blow fell on an empty

"Place. Now this tactic was no good, because to retreat

'there was nowhere to go... To clarify the situation these days there was

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reconnaissance was made. Based on the testimonies of two prisoners, we came to the conclusion that the Russians would launch a general attack on Königsberg in the coming days. Only the date of this offensive was unknown - it would begin on the fifth, sixth or seventh of April.

On April 6, at 4 o'clock in the morning, the last echelon with the wounded left Königsberg for Pillau.

At noon, after artillery preparation, which lasted three hours with the final chord of rocket launchers, the Soviet infantry and tanks, following the double barrage, moved to assault. True, the weather again did not allow for the massive use of bomber and attack aircraft. Nevertheless, as Lyash testifies, the blow turned out to be amazing:

"The Russian troops launched a general offensive of such power as I have never experienced, despite my rich experience in the east and west ... All means of communication were immediately destroyed, and only foot messengers made their way through the heaps of ruins to their command posts. points or positions. Under a hail of shells, soldiers and residents of the city huddled in the basements of houses, crowding there in terrible crowding.

The garrisons of forts and other structures, thoroughly destroyed by artillery, offered stubborn resistance, but were unable to hold back the onslaught of the Soviet troops. Assault detachments and groups, infiltrating between the forts and pillboxes under the cover of smoke screens, surrounded and blocked them from all sides.

By the end of the day, the troops of the 11th Guards Army (8th, 16th, 36th Guards Rifle Corps, 23rd Guards Tank Brigade), striking in the gap between forts No. 8 and No. 10, broke through the first defensive position, advanced to 4 kilometers, captured more than 20 strongholds and reached the southern outskirts of the city. Already by dawn, Fort No. 10 "Kanitz" was taken, and Fort No. 8 "King Friedrich Wilhelm [I]", which Lyash calls "the support of the southern

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front", was taken into a dense ring by battalions of the 84th Guards Rifle Division.

In the northwest, assault detachments of the 43rd Army (13th Guards, 54th, 90th Rifle Corps, 153rd Tank Brigade) penetrated deeply into the defenses of the 548th People's Grenadier Division in the Charlottenburg area, captured Fort No. 5a "Lendorf", blockaded Fort No. 5 "King Friedrich Wilhelm III" and cleared 20 city blocks from the enemy. General Lyash threw his reserve on this site - the regiment of the 548th division of the people's grenadiers - but he could not rise

new position.

Parts of the 50th Army (81st and 124th Rifle Corps) advanced up to 2 kilometers, occupied Fort No. 4 Gneisenau and up to 40 quarters. In the operational subordination of General F.P. Ozerov, there was the 1st Tank Corps, replenished with "thirty-fours" and 122-mm self-propelled guns, which were used in platoons as part of assault groups; The 159th Tank Brigade and the 354th Guards Heavy Self-Propelled Artillery Regiment, 39 tanks and 22 self-propelled guns, took part directly in the assault. 69th Rifle Corps, Major General N.N. Multana, with the 44th motorized rifle brigade attached to him, held the defense at the junction of the 50th and 11th Guards Armies, from Zudau to the Pregel River, with the task of preventing the Germans from breaking through in an easterly direction.

Formations of the 39th Army (5th Guards, 94th, 113th Rifle Corps, 28th Guards Tank Brigade), breaking 4 kilometers, cut the railway to Pillau west of Königsberg; the highway remained in the German

Which hands.

· The 2nd Guards and 5th armies remained at their former lines.

"It was a success, but not yet a rout. General Galitsky, who was forced to bring the second echelons into battle ahead of time, assessed the situation as follows: "On the first day of the operation, the Germans suffered heavy losses, but we also lost a lot. "We were also worried that on that day the troops took not many prisoners, therefore, a serious breakdown in the psyche of the enemy soldiers and officers had not yet come. The Nazis fought with fans

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doomed, but did not surrender." General Beloborodov was not satisfied with the results of the first day either. And Lyudnikov's troops did not complete their combat mission to the end - the corridor to Pillau continued to function.

On April 7, the armies, having reinforced the combat formations of formations with tanks, direct fire guns and anti-tank weapons, continued the offensive. Taking advantage of the clearing weather, the "Stalin's falcons" began to operate with full effort. After three strikes by front-line aviation, the strongest raid on the fortress was followed by 516 bombers from the 18th Air Army of Air Chief Marshal A.E. Golovanov (who started the war with the rank of lieutenant colonel - an amazing career in less than three years). Under the cover of 232 fighters, they dropped 560 tons of bombs, destroying defensive structures, artillery firing positions and destroying enemy manpower.

"A one and a half kilometer thick column of black smoke and dust rose above the city," recalls Galitsky, "it was a breathtaking sight. I have never seen such a powerful air strike before this day. Fires broke out in the city, many warehouses with ammunition and food were destroyed, communications failed, buildings destroyed earlier by Anglo-American heavy bombers in the central part of the city collapsed, many soldiers and officers were buried in bomb shelters under the ruins. enemy. The morale of the troops of the garrison of Königsberg was depressed, as we were told by captured officers and generals.

General Lyash: "Königsberg, wherever you look, was a terrible picture. The air was full of smoke and burning, the sky at night was ablaze in a glow of fires and flying sparks. Command posts and cellars were overflowing with residents seeking shelter... Food supplies and

ammunition were destroyed. The destruction in the city was so great that it was impossible not only to move around, but even to navigate."

The naval base was also subjected to repeated massive raids by the fleet aviation and the 4th air army.

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Pillau. In just one day, Soviet aviation made 4,758 sorties, dropping 1,658 tons of bombs.

Under the cover of artillery and aviation, infantry and tanks, with assault detachments and groups in front, persistently made their way to the city center. Street fights began, which were distinguished by a special intensity. Every hundred meters was worth blood. The guards of General Galitsky broke through the second defensive position, defeated the 69th Infantry Division, trampled two battalions of policemen from Schubert's "battle group" into the mud, advanced 2-3.5 kilometers, captured forts No. 11, 12 and 8, several industrial enterprises, a railway marshalling yard and a locomotive depot area. The rapid capture of Fort No. 8, blocked by a battalion of the 243rd Guards Rifle Regiment, was ensured by the 3rd company of the 11th separate motorized flamethrower battalion. Her actions are included in the textbook:

"During the night, 40 flamethrowers were installed on the outer side of the moat, aimed at the embrasures and windows of the central caponier. At dawn on April 7, smoke bombs were thrown into the ditch, and the ditch quickly filled with smoke. High-explosive flamethrowers aimed at the embrasures forced the enemy to stop firing from the caponier with their flame throwing. Ammunition began to burst inside the caponier, some of the Nazis received burns.

After flamethrowing, the assault units crossed the ditch and broke into the fort. Flamethrowers poured fire mixtures into the ventilation pipes and pelted them with grenades and Molotov cocktails. A fire broke out inside the fort and ammunition began to explode, which forced the fort garrison to surrender. 154 soldiers and 30 officers were taken prisoner.

In the evening, units of the 16th Guards Rifle Division, Major General M.A. Pronin came to the southern bank of the Pregel River. The 43rd Army advanced up to one kilometer and captured 15 quarters. Its right-flank units fought 3-3.5 kilometers north of the Pregel River. Assault groups of the 550th regiment of the 126th rifle division, reinforced by sappers and firefighters of the 4th assault engineer brigade

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RKG broke into Fort No. 5, which fell in the morning. The troops of the 50th Army, fighting fierce street battles, advanced up to 1.5 kilometers, captured 15 quarters and the suburb of Baidritzen. The 39th Army repulsed eighteen counterattacks and continued to rush towards Frisches Huff Bay: "The enemy is not retreating, and we are fighting to destroy him."

To resolve the crisis that had arisen, the commandant of the fortress asked General Muller for permission to transfer the 5th Panzer Division to the northwestern sector of defense and with this help to regain lost positions in the Charlottenburg region, but the 2nd Guards and 5th Armies had already gone on the offensive, and Muller could do nothing to help the bloodless garrison.

By the end of April 7, the general position of the defenders had deteriorated sharply. Almost all the lines in the south and north-west of Königsberg were broken through. The "bridgehead" that remained in German hands was shot through by Soviet artillery from all sides. An officer from the headquarters of General Schubert recalled: "Everywhere there were street battles, battles for individual houses. The inhabitants hiding in the basements were seized with despair, their wailing was heard, drowned out by the noise of battle. The boundaries of the front were indefinite; moreover, they mixed up. No one could really say what was left with us and what already belongs to the enemy. Communication between the commander of the battle group and the regiment had long been broken, and all communication with the commandant of the fortress and with the neighbors had long ceased. Right

control of the battle became impossible. The people who were in the strongholds were left to their own devices."

General Lyash, transferring units from less active sectors, mainly from the eastern sector, tried to organize a new line of defense along the northern beret with the forces of battalions subordinate to the headquarters of the 61st Infantry Division. So, almost without a fight, forts No. 1ja "Greben", No. 2 "Bronzart" and No. 2a "Barnehof" were left by the garrisons. In order to avoid complete destruction, the commandant requested permission to prepare a breakthrough to the west in order to withdraw troops and population from the city. Müller, who did not like Lyash for his defeatist mood from the moment they first met, refused "in the most harsh form."

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The fierceness of hostilities did not weaken even with the onset of darkness. Late in the evening, divisions of the 11th Guards Army, under enemy fire on amphibians and improvised means, began to force the Pregel River.

On the morning of April 8, the assault resumed with renewed vigor. On that day, all divisional artillery was attached to the assault detachments, flamethrowers and M-31 rockets were widely used in street battles. Air strikes reached their maximum strength: in the third day, Soviet pilots made 6,077 sorties, dropping 2,100 tons of bombs on the heads of the enemy in the area of Königsberg and Pillau. The red-star planes eclipsed "a piece of the Königsberg sky", and it was not clear how they fit there.

Finally, at about 2 pm, in the Amilienau area, assault detachments of the 18th Guards Rifle Division of the Galitsky army met with units of the 87th Guards Division of the Beloborodov army. The mousetrap closed. The Königsberg garrison was surrounded and divided into parts, only a part of the 561st People's Grenadier Division remained on the outer side of the ring. Soon the width of the cut corridor reached three kilometers. By order of Vasilevsky, the 43rd Army gradually turned to the west, securing the outer front of the encirclement and preparing for an offensive along the northern coast of the bay, while the 11th Guards Army turned to the east, in order to complete the destruction of the enemy, together with the divisions of the 50th Army of General Ozerov.

Convinced that the case was a sure thing, the Soviet Information Bureau issued a message: "Today our troops began an assault on the city and fortress of Königsberg ...

As a result of fierce battles, the Soviet units broke through the outer contour of the fortress positions and occupied a number of urban areas of Königsberg. Seven forts were occupied, a large number of pillboxes were cleared of the enemy infantry barracks, the main marshalling yard, the main station, the main freight station, a machine-building plant, railway workshops and the Königsberg port. Developing success, our troops advancing from the south connected with the troops advancing on the city from the northwest, and thereby clamped

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Königsberg garrison of the enemy in the iron ring. Soviet assault groups successfully overcome blockages and barricades in the streets and knock out the Germans from fortified buildings. The battlefields are littered with the corpses of the Nazis. Large trophies were captured. The number of prisoners is continuously increasing".

In the evening, the proposal of Marshal Vasilevsky to lay down their arms and surrender was transmitted to the Königsberg garrison by radio and through loud-speaking installations, leaflets with an appeal from the front commander were scattered over the city, but the German troops, holding the center and eastern part of the city, continued to resist. Russian pairs of lamenters were driven away by fire. General Lyash again offered to organize a breakthrough from the encirclement with all available forces. And again, General Muller ordered to hold the fortress to the last soldier, allowing only to break through the corridor to the west "in order to evacuate party leaders and the civilian population" by the forces of shock detachments formed from units of the 548th and 367th

divisions. The 561st People's Grenadier and 5th Panzer Divisions were to attack towards them. However, an attempt to break through at night south of the Königsberg Pillau road of prefabricated units, mixed in the dark with many thousands of refugees, was met with heavy fire from all types of weapons and failed. Among those killed were the commander of the 548th division, Major General Erich Zidau, and the head of the Königsberg police, General Schubert. The onslaught of the Germans from the outer side of the ring was repulsed by units of the 39th Army and the 90th Rifle Corps of the 43rd Army.

At dawn on April 9, after a short but powerful artillery preparation, the assault resumed along the entire front. The right-flank corps of Beloborodov's army, pushing the enemy to the east of Metgeten, captured forts No. 6 "Queen Louise" and No. 7 "Duke von Holstein". The divisions of the 36th Guards Corps of the 11th Guards Army, squeezing the encirclement from the west, broke through the internal defensive position and captured the North Station. From the east, units of the 69th Rifle Corps of the 50th Army began to advance towards the city center. In urban areas, the German defense,

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in fact, it no longer had a single control, broke up into separate sections and pockets of resistance. On the ruins of what used to be called streets, everything was mixed up - people, equipment, fragments of collapsed buildings - making it impossible to use bombing aviation:

"Daytime battles were also tense. The artillery preparation did not give the desired results, and, as yesterday, the enemy had to be driven out of his city fortifications. Assault detachments surrounded and stormed the fortified quarters and houses. However, the position of our units became more and more difficult. They encountered such a new phenomenon as the "layering" of battle formations, when our and German units fought in the same house on different floors. Some detachments penetrated deeply into the enemy defenses, and the Germans still held the neighboring quarters. The flanks were exposed. Artillery in such cases could not do anything. This gave the enemy the opportunity to cut off the groups that had broken through with fire. Centers of encirclement were formed in the environment".

At 1 pm, the 1st Guards Moscow-Minsk Rifle Division, Colonel P.F. Tolstikova launched an attack on the Royal Castle, which housed the headquarters of the Volkssturm. The 16th Guards Rifle Corps started fighting for the central quarters of the city in the immediate vicinity of the command post of General Lyash. The 8th Guards Corps by 19 o'clock connected with units of the 50th Army. The Germans still continued to hold the center and the eastern part of the city, but the position of the garrison became completely hopeless. In view of the hopelessness of resistance, in some areas entire units began to surrender, in other places "desperate women tried to snatch weapons from the soldiers and hang a white flag from the windows in order to put an end to the horrors of war."

In this situation, Lyash decided to lay down his arms and "agree to an honorable surrender." Having informed the main command and his troops about this by radio, the commandant sent parliamentarians to the Russians. Finally, "after long eerie hours of waiting," a group of

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Soviet officers led by the chief of staff of the 27th Guards Division, Lieutenant Colonel P.G. Yanovsky. At about 11 p.m. on April 9, in the bunker on Paradnaya Square, General Lyash signed the act of unconditional surrender of the garrison and ordered the immediate cessation of resistance with detailed instructions on where, to whom and how to surrender.

However, since far from all German units had working radios, the commandant's order did not reach them, and there was no organized surrender: "The enemy's fire on a number of sectors of the front did not stop for some time and did not even weaken." In this regard, at the suggestion of the Soviet command and not without some hesitation, Lyash turned to the remnants of the garrison with an appeal through loud-speaking installations. Then he proceeded to

captivity. For the next ten years, the general spent interesting time in the open spaces of Russia, studying many sights - from Butyrki to the southern coast of the Arctic Ocean - and recalling the assurances of Marshal Vasilevsky that WHAT was sent "to the camp of the sanatorium type."

On the morning of April 10, it was all over.

As a result of the Königsberg operation, the Soviet troops, according to Vasilevsky's report, compiled in hot pursuit, destroyed 104 tanks and assault guns, 120 aircraft, 1,750 guns and mortars, killed 42,000 German soldiers and officers, and captured more than 92,000 in four days. . As trophies, they got 3,700 guns and mortars, 89 tanks and assault guns, many other military equipment and weapons, a large number of locomotives and motor vehicles. Judging by the figures, the entire male population of the city, along with foreign workers, was taken prisoner.

The 2nd Guards and 5th Armies could not boast of success: for three days they hardly advanced and only in places captured the first and second trenches, after which they "fixed themselves at the achieved line."

Upon learning of the fall of Koenigsberg, Hitler ordered the commandant of the Lyash fortress to be sentenced in absentia to death, and his family to be repressed. The commander of the 4th Army, General Müller, was removed from his post, and was appointed in his place.

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General Dietrich von Saucken. The German command liquidated the Zemland task force, and included the surviving troops into the newly created East Prussia army, which also included the remnants of the former Army Group North that survived on the Hel Spit and in the floodplains of the Vistula delta.

Moscow celebrated the victory with a salute of the highest category — 24 artillery volleys from 324 guns, and on June 9, 1945, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR established the medal "For the Capture of Koenigsberg", which was awarded to all participants in the battles for the fortress city.

And, of course, there was a feast of winners:

"Houses burned, smoked. Upholstered furniture, musical instruments, kitchen utensils, paintings, porcelain - all this was thrown out of the houses and continued to be thrown out. Wrecked vehicles stood between the burning tanks, clothes and equipment lay all around. Drunken Russians were wandering around right there. Some fired wildly at random, others tried to ride bicycles, but fell and were left unconscious in the gutters with bleeding wounds. Weeping, struggling girls and women were dragged into the houses. The children screamed, calling their parents, we walked further and further. Before our eyes there were pictures that are impossible to describe. Roadside ditches were full of corpses. Dead bodies bore traces of unimaginable atrocities and rapes. There were many dead children lying around. Hanged men dangled from the trees, their ears cut off and their eyes gouged out. German women were led in different directions. Drunken Russians fought over a nurse. On the side of the highway under the tree

, An old woman was sitting there, both of her legs were crushed by a machine gun.

_ tire. Farms were burning, home belongings were lying on the road,

Cattle ran around, they shot at him, killing indiscriminately. Before

. We heard cries of people crying for help. FROM HOUSES, UNDER

holding hands in prayer, women came out, the Russians drove them back and shot at them if they did not leave right away. If Marshal Vasilevsky counted the losses of the Germans already by

evening of April 10, then their own losses in Königsberg from more „ known only approximately than 50 thousand people killed

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tymi and wounded for the period from 5 to 10 April. If we take on faith Bagramyan's statement that "the total number of people in the rifle divisions, counting the rear units, did not exceed two and a half thousand," then it turns out that the armies lost at least half of their personnel.

composition.

Almost immediately, Vasilevsky ordered to proceed to the second stage - the liquidation of the Zemland grouping of the enemy. Question: why did the marshal need this, who himself wrote: "The Königsberg fortified area is the basis of the German defense on the Zemland Peninsula. With the loss of this region and the capital of East Prussia, further stubborn resistance of the enemy on the Samland Peninsula loses its meaning, or at least its significance. For the Germans, who ensured the evacuation of the population, stubborn defense retained "its significance" until the last day. But what "meaning" the next assault had, Alexander Mikhailovich did not bother to explain.

On the peninsula, a front about 50 kilometers long was occupied by the 95th, 93rd, 58th, 1st, 21st Infantry, 28th Jaeger, 551st, 561st People's Grenadier and 5th Panzer Divisions. The German field defenses had a dense network of trenches, strongholds and centers of resistance. The main strip included three positions, each of which had three trenches, numerous communication passages, dugouts and bunkers. Another line of defense blocked access to Fischhausen and the peninsula on which the Pillau naval base was located.

In the second echelon was the 55th Army Corps - three to four divisions and a number of special units. The German group consisted of 65 thousand people, 1200 guns and mortars, 166 tanks and assault guns.

The troops of the 3rd Belorussian Front again had to make a breakthrough. According to the plan, the 5th and 39th Armies delivered the main blow along the shortest distance along the railroad and highway to Fischhausen, cutting the enemy grouping into two parts. 2nd Guards and 43rd Armies were to

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to provide an offensive, moving along the northern and southern coasts of the Zemland Peninsula.

The 11th Guards Army, put into reserve, was given the task of putting itself in order, "preparing intensively for new battles" and being ready to build on the success of the first echelon. In this regard, for example, the commander of the 84th Guards Rifle Division, Major General Shcherbina, issued an order:

"1. Stop fighting in the Königsberg area.

2. Prepare parts for the performance in the general direction northwest of the city of Koenigsberg.

3. Pull up all the rear and lagging fighters, build them into units. On inspection, check all the carts, unload and take away unnecessary trophy items from the carts.

4. Warn all personnel and demand an end to revelry and robbery in the city. All those who lag behind and without permission leave the unit or formation and are seen in the barracks to be arrested and brought to trial by the Military Tribunal. During the march through the city, strictly observe discipline and order and follow only in formation.

Troops of the 50th Army, whose commander was appointed commandant of Koenigsberg, continued to clean up the city and its environs.

Over 111,000 soldiers and officers, 5,200 guns and mortars, 451 rocket artillery installations, 324 tanks and self-propelled guns were involved in one of the most senseless operations in the operational plan of the Red Army.

From the air, the offensive was supported by the 1st and 3rd air armies.

The Baltic Fleet received the task of securing the coastal flank of the 2nd Guards Army from possible enemy shelling and landings from the sea, assisting the offensive along the coast with naval artillery fire, and disrupting the evacuation of enemy troops and technology.

The readiness of the troops for the start of the operation was scheduled for the end of the day on April 11. There was no response to the proposal of the Soviet command "within 24 hours to lay down arms, stop resistance and surrender", and Vasilevsky gave the order: "Attack and destroy!"

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On the night before the offensive, the 1st and 3rd air armies delivered a series of massive strikes against the battle formations of the enemy troops, defensive structures, ports and communication centers.

On the morning of April 13, after a powerful one-hour artillery preparation, the troops of the 3rd Belorussian Front went over to the offensive, which developed "not everywhere according to plan."

"For a whole hour, a firestorm raged on the peninsula," Bagramyan writes, "it seemed that all the fascist strongholds would be plowed up by explosions. But at 9 o'clock the troops went on the attack - and the rearing, blackened earth suddenly came to life. The Nazis offered strong fire resistance, and when the advancing units broke into the depths of the defensive zone, their continuous counterattacks followed. Despite the strong and continuous support of aviation, which made 6,111 sorties on the first day, the main strike force managed to push the enemy back only 3-5 kilometers.

Having guessed the Soviet intentions, the German command condensed the battle formations in front of the armies of Krylov and Lyudnikov and on April 14 began to withdraw troops on the sector of the right flank of the 2nd Guards Army. Heavy fighting continued the next day. Having received General Chanchibadze's report on the enemy's withdrawal, Vasilevsky ordered on April 15 to transfer two tank brigades and two self-propelled artillery regiments to the zone of the 2nd shock army. True, in the 159th tank brigade and the 344th self-propelled regiment - the only combat-ready formations of the 1st tank corps - 12 T-34 tanks, 15 ISU-122 and 1 SU-85 remained in service. For three days in the main direction, the Soviet armies advanced 9-10 kilometers, while Chanchibadze's troops advanced 25 kilometers, occupying Germau and Rotenen. However, the Germans managed to withdraw their northern grouping from the threat of encirclement. Every day, 6-7 thousand fighters were out of action near Vasilevsky.

On April 15 and 16, in order to facilitate the advance of the 43rd Army, the sailors landed two tactical landings from the 24th Guards Rifle Division on the Koenigsberg dam

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Canal and supported the offensive with fire from boats and long-range artillery guns. By their actions, the Baltics helped Beloborodov's formations to drive the Germans out of the settlements of Zimmerbude and Peise. The pursuit of the enemy by the 2nd Guards Army along the coast of the Baltic Sea in a southerly direction and the offensive of the 5th and 39th armies in the general direction of Fischhausen forced the Germans to pull troops to the southwestern part of the Zemland Peninsula and organize defense on narrow front.

On the night of April 17, formations of the 39th and 43rd armies captured Fischhausen with a double blow. Little remains of the town, as well as of the 1st East Prussian Infantry Division that defended the town. One of the German soldiers recalled:

"Before lunch, almost 500 bombs fell within half an hour. Already after the first wave, the city was on fire in all corners and ends. Later, the Russians dropped bombs on our positions as well, causing large fires. Here, east of Fischhausen, I had to see and experience a lot. A Soviet pilot, descending on a parachute from a downed plane, fired at us from a machine gun. Massive fire was opened on him. And he dropped to the ground dead. Between the raids of new bombers, we managed to leave the city, since it was already

it is forbidden".

In general, Soviet aviation played a major role in this operation. Here is the testimony of another "injured" from the defunct 5th Panzer Division: "I counted more than a hundred aircraft. Moaning, screaming reigned in the air. People fled from the forest, but even here they did not escape death. She followed us around. Of the remaining six tanks and "panthers" that the regiment had at that time, four were destroyed, from one tank, which, due to lack of fuel, was equipped as a pillbox, there was no trace left. For two days we could not remove the corpses from this forest cemetery. Pieces of meat were mixed with the ground, with the remains of tanks and caterpillars. It was some kind of horror. I barely survived an air raid in Hamburg, but it was easier there: although they (the British) bombard with more powerful blows, but there, if you managed to take cover quickly, you can save

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sept. But Russian planes are constantly bombing, storming even at night."

Beloborodov's divisions completely captured the area southeast of Fischhausen and reached the coast of Frisches-Huff Bay. However, the 2nd Guards in its movement to the south overcame only 2 kilometers and again ran into a well-prepared defense, the army's casualties reached 5,000 killed and wounded.

On the fifth day of the offensive, Soviet troops completely cleared the Zemland Peninsula from the enemy and reached the line of the Pilaus Peninsula. The latter was 15 kilometers long and 2 to 5 kilometers wide, and every 1-2 kilometers it was crossed by six defensive positions saturated with pillboxes, anti-tank and anti-personnel obstacles.

The approaches to Pillau from the sea were covered by 18 concrete pillboxes located along the western coast. From the north, it was defended by four forts and an ancient fortress with five-meter stone walls, an earthen rampart and a wide moat filled with water. The city itself was prepared for defense. There were four airfields in the vicinity.

About 40 thousand soldiers and officers from the remnants of ten infantry, one tank and one anti-aircraft division, the "Grossdeutschland" motorized division, other units, formations and battle groups defended in Pillau and on the Frische-Nerung spit.

"In a word," Bagramyan sums up, "Pillau is a miniature Königsberg." But "the most cunning of the Armenians" does not explain why, in fact, it was necessary to gnaw through all these positions at the moment when Zhukov had already stormed the Seelow Heights.

The operation dragged on, and Vasilevsky decided to bring fresh forces into the battle. In the first half of the day on April 16, the headquarters of the 11th Guards Army received an order to change the positions of the 2nd Guards Army, and on April 18 to launch an offensive on Pillau and the Frische-Nerung Spit with a simultaneous landing of amphibious assault forces in the Neytif area. Judging by the story of Galitsky, the Soviet command presented the case

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'ilev: "Having received a combat mission, the chief of staff, 'the commander of artillery and a group of officers and I went to the 'igtab of the 2nd Guards Army to get acquainted with all the data that they had about the Pillaus Peninsula,' © the enemy and his fortifications, and also to agree on the procedure for changing troops. But, unfortunately, the headquarters of the 2nd Guards had only general information about the grouping of German troops. The mood of the army leadership was too optimistic. It believed that the enemy had been routed and that it would not take much effort to knock him out of the positions he was occupying. On the basis of such rosy assessments, the front's commanders expected to capture Pillau within two days, and then land on the Frische-Nerung spit on the move. » The rest of the armies were put into reserve.

Replacing Chanchibadze's troops on the night of April 18, formations of the 11th Guards Army carried out reconnaissance in force for two days, clarifying data on the enemy. Moreover, the average daily losses during the "reconnaissance" amounted to 2350 people, killed and wounded. The total losses of the front during the week of fighting reached 32 thousand people. During the same period, the German 511th Heavy Tank Battalion chalked up 102 Soviet combat vehicles. . Marshal Vasilevsky was awarded the second Order of Victory on April 19. and: In the hours of April 20, after artillery preparation from 200 barrels on a front of 3 kilometers, having ahead of them heavy and S-2 and ISU-152, the infantry of the 16th and 36th Guards Rifle Corps went on the attack. In a day they managed to

C and have not been properly explored, which significantly reduces the effectiveness of artillery fire, low cloudiness C ovi aviation actions, a small width of land with high and yuk steep banks excluded maneuver, sand dunes overgrown with shrubs and trees served as natural a significant obstacle to the movement of vehicles. Evening | Chief of Staff of the 99th Guards Rifle Regiment doro IL: "Losses in manpower and equipment 70%".

(from the next day, repelling continuous counterattacks,

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under heavy fire, "piston" squeezing out the enemy, covered another kilometer, and commander-11 finally "became clear": "The fascist German command is throwing against us everything that they can muster in their rear. Its defenses are saturated with artillery and mortars, not to mention small arms. A system of concrete and armored pillboxes, concrete platforms for heavy guns, trenches, communications and anti-tank ditches has been created. And the closer to the Pillau fortress, the more these fortifications were encountered. On average, for every 100 m there are 4 machine guns and up to 200 submachine gunners. A large number of firing points for flanking fire. Anti-tank and assault guns have wide sectors of fire."

The old people grumbled:

"How many times before my eyes they drove people like cattle to slaughter, to take some height of 126.0 or the village of Kozodoevka, which no one ever needed.

But they drove us mercilessly to these skyscrapers and villages, to the joyful squeals of staff "morons" and political officers - "This is our gift to the Motherland} for the next holiday date ... The infantry was never spared at all ...

Who needed the assault on Pillau at the end of April 1945, when the Germans were tightly blockaded by land and sea in the forts? But we were driven to take this Pillau by May 1st!

The 16th Guards Rifle Corps was advancing along the narrow tip of the Frisch Gaff. Divisions for the offensive were deployed in three echelons. Our division was in the third wave of those advancing on Pillau. We walked and crawled literally on the flooring of the corpses of our comrades. The first two waves of attackers were completely destroyed by the fire of naval and anti-aircraft guns from the forts of the base. Why didn't they wait for the encircled Germans to capitulate themselves? Who needed these thousands of unjustified victims ten days before the Victory?

You know, I had to take part in reconnaissance in combat many times. And if the battalion commander was a decent person and felt sorry for his soldiers, then he sacrificed only one platoon, according to

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”, sending him forward to certain death. At the same time, a report went to the headquarters - “The battalion is suffering losses! I ask for permission to withdraw to the starting positions!” or a “special __ But if the political officer stood next to the battalion commander, officer”, or an inspector from the headquarters of the regiment and division, then the whole battle went under the knife ... Quite , seriously I tell you that the command staff at the end of the war is striking and for the worse in 1941. Starting from 1942, The officers especially adored the nothing was done at the front; it was different from the commanders , without obscenities. mat. Everywhere, . always and for any reason ... Culture is zero, but here they are like that And so on the front line everyone is torn, nerves from , opportunity to humiliate a soldier! Few could resist _ such a "temptation". the constant expectation of death, hunger and longing. The soldiers were exhausted and worn out by the war. People were , often evil, serious conflicts could arise. right. And urgently build a dugout for him for the night three times, and give orders to the left and dig a trench in for the most insignificant reason. And then there appears full profile, and two machine guns | Put CHIKOV near the dugout for the night. And the fact that people from the location orders!" There was a distrust of the - this "Mr. Ra was not interested! We have an iron soldier's rule: "Do not rush to follow people who were entrusted with commanding us. | There is one more nuance. Sometimes there were monster commanders. It was enough just not to fatigue drags our feet with difficulty, and in the morning we still have to change like such an officer; yell - and the soldier was guaranteed a penal company or death in the nearest battle! Naval, field and anti-aircraft artillery fired at us. In the literal sense, we were greeted with a “sea of fire”. The only chance to somehow luxuriate in THIS "valley of death" was the following. The pause between and at the halls of German artillery was five seconds. For and th time it was necessary to run from one funnel to another,

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And

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and then - how lucky ... Those who did not manage to meet this time were immediately torn to shreds.

Up to 50 artillery, mortar and rocket batteries with a total number of 306 barrels fired at the Soviet troops, including six of 210 mm caliber. The infantry was supported by 88 tanks and assault guns.

And over the sea and the Pillau raid, the warships of the Kriegsmarine fired with the main caliber. And this despite the fact that Admiral Tributs only in two weeks of April "flooded" the German fleet by half a million tons:

“During April 7 and 8, the aircraft of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet attacked enemy ships and transports in the port of Pillau and in the Danzig Bay. As a result of these strikes, nine German transports with a total displacement of 36,000 tons, one destroyer, two patrol ships and two high-speed landing barges were sunk. A direct hit by bombs damaged: one cruiser, one destroyer, one minesweeper and two enemy transports with a displacement of 6000 and 4000 tons.

On April 10, aviation of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet attacked German warships and transports in the port of Pillau and in the open sea northwest of Pillau. As a result

These strikes sank: two German destroyers, two patrol ships, ten transports with a total displacement of 60,000 tons and one tanker with a displacement of 2,000 tons. In addition, a direct hit by bombs damaged: one destroyer, one patrol ship and seven enemy transports.

|| April aviation of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet attacked German ships and military transports in the port of Pillau and in the open sea northwest of Pillau. As a result of this strike, one destroyer and three enemy transports with a total displacement of 23,000 tons were sunk. In addition, a direct bomb hit set fire to one transport with a displacement of 7,000 tons and damaged a transport with a displacement of 8,000 tons.

On April 12 and 13, the aviation of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet continued to strike at warships and

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enemy transports in the port of Pillau and on the high seas northwest of Pillau. As a result of bombing and torpedo attacks

In the ditch, one destroyer, nine patrol ships, two minesweepers, one tanker with a displacement of 10,000 tons and eighteen enemy transports with a total displacement of 92,000 tons were sunk.

On April 15 and 16, aviation of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet attacked enemy ships and transports in the port of Pillau and in the open sea northwest of Pillau. As a result of these strikes, eight transports were sunk

` with a total displacement of 46,000 tons, a minesweeper and fourteen enemy patrol boats.

Fleet ships sunk two German destroyers.

Our ships in the Baltic Sea sank a German transport with a displacement of 7,000 tons.

° 19 April ships of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet sank in the southern part of the Baltic Sea transport

`tivnik with a displacement of 5 thousand tons.

° On April 20, aircraft of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet in the port of Pillau and northwest of Pillau sank four German transports with a total displacement of 15,000 tons and four tankers with a displacement of 14,000 tons.

Ships of the fleet in the Baltic Sea sunk transport

"an enemy with a displacement of 8,000 tons.

: April 22 ships of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet

sank in the southern part of the Baltic Sea a German trans-

. port with a displacement of 8 thousand tons. Nano Fleet Aviation

force strikes against enemy ships in the port of Pillau and northwest

, , Above Pillau. Sunk as a result of these strikes: one

transport with a displacement of 6 thousand tons, two high-speed

| US landing barges, two dry cargo barges and two boats.

on April 23 by the ships of the Red Banner Baltic

a fleet in the southern part of the Baltic Sea sunk two non-

, Metsk transport with a total displacement of 12 thousand tons.

April 24 Aviation of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet

"sank in the Baltic Sea transport, high-speed de-

| ` barge and self-propelled pontoon of the enemy.

_ April 25 ships of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet

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sank a German transport with a displacement of 10,000 tons in the southern part of the Baltic Sea. Fleet aviation sank four transports with a total displacement of 18 thousand tons, a patrol ship, a high-speed landing barge and three enemy motorized boats in the Baltic Sea"!!!

On the morning of April 22, General Galitsky on his right flank brought the 8th Guards Rifle Corps into action.

Thanks to this, the Germans pushed back another three kilometers and captured the strongholds of Lochstedt and the Children's Resort. The commander of the 16th Corps, Major General S.S., was killed in the battle. Guriev. On April 23, Galitsky halted the offensive, pulled up artillery and changed the units that suffered the most losses. By order of the commander, all rear "specialists" were sent to the front line, with the exception of cooks: hairdressers, shoemakers, bakers, storekeepers.

All the next day, two guards rifle divisions fought for Neuhauser, on the outskirts of which the remnants of the Grossdeutschland division and other defeated units were entrenched. In connection with the improvement of the weather, Soviet aviation significantly intensified its operations, which made over 2,000 sorties, destroyed warehouses with ammunition and fuel, and, as Bagramyan notes, "turned Pillau into a pitch hell." Nobody extinguished the fires in the city. The Defense Headquarters ordered the evacuation of non-combat-ready units, officials and party functionaries, and female support personnel from the city. Specially assigned teams hurriedly destroyed the remaining military equipment, burned fuel supplies, warehouses with food and uniforms, blew up ammunition for submarines, and completely shot animals. Gauleiter Koch embarked on the icebreaker "East Prussia" and departed for Denmark. The resistance of the Germans began to weaken, although their artillery still kept under fire the entire surrounding area up to Fischhausen, where the observation post of the 11th Guards Army was located. On April 24, Marshal Vasilevsky came under fire here, rushing in to dismantle

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Xia in the environment. Alexander Mikhailovich himself was not injured, but the wrecked "Willis" had to change.

On the night and day of April 25, the German command evacuated up to 40,000 wounded, refugees, and soldiers from the peninsula, including 7,000 people to the Hel Spit. The 558th People's Grenadier Division remained in Pillau; the village of Neutif and the northern part of the spit were defended by the 50th infantry division.

On the morning of April 25, Soviet troops bypassed Pillau from the east and broke into the burning city. The corps commanders had the task of accessing their sectors to the Zeetif Strait on the move

force it without waiting for the complete capture of the city. Additionally, it was planned to land troops on the Frische-Nerung spit south of the strait. All day in the city there were fierce, turning into hand-to-hand fights, fights were fought for every pier and every house. By 8 p.m. the German garrison of the Eastern Fort laid down its arms. Units of the 84th Guards Rifle Division stormed the railway station with dozens of echelons on the tracks. Soviet soldiers crossed the fortress canal to the old part of the city, where the fighting continued all night. The divisions of the 8th Guards Rifle Corps reached the strait and, with strong air support, under the cover of barrage artillery fire and smoke screens, proceeded to force the NII.

The last center of resistance was the citadel, on the wall

On top of which the proud words "Death or Siberia" were inscribed in large letters. The garrison, estimated at a thousand men, repelled all attacks by the 1st Guards Rifle Division and rejected the ultimatum to surrender. Aerial bombardments and artillery shelling did not give visible results. In the midst of the battle, General Galitsky was allowed by Marshal Vasilevsky and warned that, in accordance with Stalin's instructions, a salute of the second category would be fired in Moscow at 11 p.m. to commemorate the capture of the city and fortress "Pillau". "On April 25, the troops of the 3rd Belorussian Front captured the last German defensive point on the Zemland Peninsula, the city and fortress of PILLAU, a large port and

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naval base of the Germans on the Baltic Sea. The commanding officer understood the hint correctly: "the trust of the Motherland" had to be justified. Senior officers of the field administration and the political department of the army immediately left for the front line, all available reserves were allocated - dozens of large-caliber guns, tanks and heavy self-propelled guns.

Fireworks were already blooming over Red Square. when the soldiers of the proletarian division were preparing to storm the citadel.

In Galitsky's description, this was reminiscent of the assault on Izmail: "Heavy tanks and self-propelled guns smashed the gates and stone barriers with direct fire. Hundreds of guardsmen, filling up the ditch with fascines, boards and various improvised materials, broke through to the 5-meter walls, penetrated the gaps, climbed the wall by ladders. A close combat began with the use of grenades, flame-throwers, heavy sabers.

The citadel fell at dawn on 26 April. Immediately after the capture of Pillau, Marshal Vasilevsky surrendered the front to Bagramyan and flew to Moscow to prepare an attack on Japan.

The defeat of the enemy on the Zemland Peninsula was the finale of the entire East Prussian operation, which lasted 103 days and nights. As a result, "the hearth and outpost of German imperialism in the east" was liquidated. The official losses of the Red Army amounted to more than 126 thousand killed, 458 thousand wounded, 3535 tanks and self-propelled guns, 1644 guns and mortars, 1450 combat aircraft.

After the capture of Pillau, only the narrow Frische-Nerung spit remained in the hands of the Germans. According to the reconnaissance report, the southern part of the spit was defended by the remnants of the enemy's Danzig grouping, the middle part by German units defeated southwest of Königsberg. In the northern part of the spit were all those who managed to leave Pillau. In total - a little over 32 thousand soldiers and officers, up to 15 tanks and assault guns, as well as tens of thousands of refugees, prisoners of war of the Red Army and foreign workers from all over Europe. Never before have there been so many people here.

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votnyh, cars and wagons, military equipment and cargo, as in those April days.

"Here, on the Frische-Nerung spit," reports a German author, "the days of an indescribable nightmare began. The entire spit was filled with columns of refugees who crossed here from Pillau, Balga and Gdansk. Large crowds of people and vehicles were very difficult for Russian aviation.

desired goals.

German soldiers in large groups, under the guise of the sick and wounded, left their positions and crowded around the pile piers, fearing to fall into the hands of the police, gendarmerie and SS guarding the crossroads, settlements, warehouses and sections of the coast, where, on the orders of General Saucken, they were undermined all boats, boats and boats. noted

, cases when German anti-aircraft gunners did not open fire on aircraft in order to avoid bombing by Soviet aircraft".

The defense consisted of 10-12 lines. Each line included several lines of trenches with platforms for machine guns and guns. The approaches to them were covered by minefields, forest blockages and anti-tank ditches. The troops were supported by up to 40 batteries of field, coastal and anti-aircraft artillery.

As of April 25, the 11th Guards Army still had personnel - 38,223 soldiers and officers. Of these, it was decided to send 18 thousand people, as well as 36 tanks, 118 self-propelled guns, 662 guns, [54 RS installations.

On the night of April 26, the 17th Guards Regiment of the 5th Gorodok Guards Rifle Division crossed the strait on amphibians and fishing schooners and captured the village of Neutif by morning. divisions, which cleared the western part of the Frische-Nerung spit from the enemy, capturing 4,500 prisoners.

Wu heavy machinery.

The capture of the bridgehead served as a signal for the landing of two tactical amphibious assault forces.

In 1945, for the first time in the war, the command of the Baltic Fleet received a directive stating: "Opera

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The fleet's rationing zone is the entire Baltic Sea up to the straits."

Therefore, back in February, the People's Commissar of the Navy ordered the transfer of the fleet forces to the Zemland Peninsula, the capture of which seemed to be a short-lived matter, the main base here was to be Pillau. Soon a minesweeper brigade and a boat brigade settled in Kranz, but the issue with Pillau dragged on. The command of the Baltic Fleet wanted to distinguish itself and do something heroic, and it began to develop a landing operation designed to prevent the organized evacuation of the Germans and the destruction of the berthing facilities of the Pilaus port. To do this, during the assault, it was planned to simultaneously land directly into the city the "western" detachment from the sea and the "eastern" detachment from the bay. However, the army authorities, who were supposed to provide a military contingent for the landing, were skeptical about the idea. To be honest, not unreasonable, since most of the 24 landing operations carried out by the Baltic Fleet turned out to be a failure. As a rule, due to the lack of specialized watercraft, interaction with other branches of the armed forces, ignorance of the enemy and inability to properly organize the case. Briefly speaking. without much preparation. with the exception of training with fighters on the ability to jump overboard.

In March, General Galitsky hardly dissuaded Baghramyan from the landing force proposed by the sailors in order to intercept the Koenigsberg-Pillau highway and thereby saved the rifle regiment, which, according to the plan, in front of the eyes of the enemy, had to overcome the bay and the Koenigsberg Sea Canal on rowing pontoons. The offensive of the 43rd Army into the depths of Zemland should also have been preceded by

landing on armored boats, relocated from Topeau to the Königsberg commercial port. On the night of April 13, a detachment of armored vehicles, having entered the designated area and not understanding where the front line was, came under fire from their artillery and, having suffered losses. returned back. The command of the fleet did not lose confidence and continued to insist on a landing at Pillau until

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until Vasilevsky explicitly forbade doing so. Perhaps the marshal knew better the situation at sea, where the German fleet dominated, than Admiral Tributs, who allegedly had already destroyed it. Finally, the option of landing two detachments on the Frische Nerung Spit, 10 kilometers south of the strait, was approved.

The forces of the "western" landing force, which from the Palmniken area reared the enemy under the cover of an armored boat division, were supposed to deliver torpedo boats and minesweepers, consisted of a consolidated regiment of the 83rd Guards Rifle Division numbering 600 people under the command of Colonel L .T. White. "Eastern" landing under the command of Major General I.I. Kuzmichev was formed in the Peise-Zimmerbule area. The detachment — it was going to be transferred in two echelons on armored boats, motorboats and longboats towed by them — included the regiment of the 260th marine brigade, the 487th naval disciplinary battalion and the combined regiment of the 43rd army. The total number is 1311 fighters and commanders with 9 guns and 25 mortars.

The landing was to be supported by aviation and an army artillery group - two brigades - 72 howitzers, which were supposed to provide an artillery curtain, having 13 shells per trunk.

It was supposed to cut the spit with counter strikes by two detachments, force the grouping on the northern tip to capitulate, and then continue the offensive in a southerly direction.

The general management of the operation was carried out by the headquarters of the South-Western Marine Defense Region (YUZMOR) under the leadership of Vice Admiral N.I. Vinogradov. The operation was scheduled for April 19, but the date had to be postponed.

On April 25, the commanders received tables of call signs and signals, and landing began. This was followed by "inevitable accidents at sea."

Around midnight, the "western" detachment went out to sea and, having traveled 15 miles, approached the spit and froze in anticipation.

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At the same time, having climbed onto the armored boat, the first echelon of the "eastern" landing force began to cross (and during the loading it turned out that a lot of things "do not fit", for example, only one 76-mm gun and 18 mortars were taken on board - Comrade). Following two wake columns, the ships bypassed the minefield accidentally "found" in the morning (the armored boat BK-212 was killed on it, and the BK-102 lost its stern) and, turning on a combat course, began to reorganize into a common column. In the course of the evolution being carried out, the right column, due to a mistake by the navigator, stumbled in the dark on the "unknown land" and, without encountering any opposition, exemplarily landed the marines ashore. The reconnaissance sent ahead did not detect the enemy. The officers, spreading out the maps and checking the terrain, established that they were on the dam of the Königsberg Canal in the rear of their troops. After that, they ordered to collect fighters and equipment and load back onto the boats.

While the "left hand" figured out where the "right hand" had gone, the hour "H" came. In accordance with the plan, unaware of the problems "at sea", the front's aviation attacked the northern part of the Frische-Nerung spit. The 37th Artillery Brigade of the 43rd Army carried out a 20-minute fire raid on the alleged German positions and fired 480 shells into the darkness. left for

Koenigsberg. The 150th artillery brigade of the 11th Guards Army did not waste shells, because they did not shoot at all: the brigade commander found out about his participation in the operation half an hour before it began, and the sailors did not know either the call sign of the brigade or its location.

During the artillery raid, the boats of the "western" landing force, hiding behind a smoke screen, rushed to the shore. At about 2 o'clock in the morning, the soldiers of Colonel Bely landed on the spit under enemy fire. There were unexpectedly many Germans - at that time, an infantry column was withdrawing from the north, immediately attacking the paratroopers. In the morning, the landing force, pressed to the sea, split into separate groups, fought on a five-kilometer section of the beach. Ammunition was running out, the ships returned to base, there was no communication with anyone. Hardly succeeded

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"Start up" an artillery support radio station and with this help establish contact with the headquarters of the 11 Army. Colonel White later wrote in a report:

"Our maps do not reflect reality. In the Waldhalle region, the whole village, which is located on the spit, is not plotted. There were enough mines, but they were not unloaded after the landing. The boats are gone. And the shore was immediately occupied against Nick.

If the enemy had not been demoralized and managed to organize and build a plan for the liquidation of the detachment, then he would have been able to easily carry it out. The landing detachment should not be subordinated to the naval headquarters, since the latter do not have reliable communications with the infantry units and artillery and are unable to lead the detachment. The detachment commander had to independently contact the headquarters, clarify the situation, ask for help, and during the entire operation he never managed to contact Yuzhmor, to which the detachment was subordinated by order.

The wonderful organization of the landing operation in the last month of the war!

The "Eastern" landing force landed two hours later than the appointed time and a kilometer south of the designated area. The Germans have already "been warned" and are ready to meet. In the first throw of the attackers there were soldiers of the disciplinary battalion:

"Having fallen under heavy fire from the enemy, the first full of penalty boxes was killed almost entirely. The second wave of sailors met in hand-to-hand combat with the Nazis. In the course went knives and stocks. No one fired, so as not to hurt their own, the cries of "hurrah" were also not heard. In front of the parapet of the first trench of the Nazis there was a continuous rumble, the crackle of breaking weapons and cursing. The Germans could not stand the fury of the sailors and began to retreat. Waging a stubborn battle, the sailors rushed to the attack, expanding the breakthrough for the second echelon. Artillerymen showed miracles of courage. The only fire support weapon operated in the advanced formations of the sailors until it had shot all the shells. This saved the situation until the arrival of the second troop echelon. As it turned out later,

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Tera, who delivered the ammunition to the landing party, unloaded it in the ekm north of the combat area (!).

The second echelon, having processed the battle formations of the first echelon with artillery fire, went ashore at about 9 o'clock in the morning. The landing of the third echelon failed, as the sailors could not find a bridgehead.

By 10 o'clock the "western" and "eastern" found each other, and at about 13 o'clock they met with units of the 11th Guards Army advancing from the north. As a result, about 10 kilometers of the spit were cleared of the enemy, large trophies and 5,800 prisoners were captured. The losses of paratroopers amounted to 243 people killed and missing and 240 wounded. Lost one torpedo boat.

True, south of Cape Mevven Haken, the movement of Soviet troops again stalled. Bagramyan explains the stubbornness of the Germans in a hopeless situation by their pathological viciousness:

"Having studied the protocols of interrogation of numerous prisoners, the chief of intelligence of the front reported to me that most of the Nazis who had taken refuge on the spit and in the floodplains were the most inveterate bandits, mainly from the punitive troops, the police, inveterate Nazis and war criminals, on whose conscience lay many bloody deeds committed by them in the occupied lands. Now they, fearing retribution, snarled like hunted wolves, and did not respond to repeated offers to lay down their arms.

Hans Scheufler of the 4th Panzer Division described the situation from his side:

"Almost unarmed soldiers in worn out uniforms, with dead eyes on gray faces that reflected horror, hurried west day and night along the bumpy log decks along the Frische-Nerung Spit. These were the surviving soldiers of the German 4th Army, defeated in East Prussia, from the Zemland Peninsula, from Königsberg, who somehow somehow managed to avoid captivity or death on the shores of Frisches Bay in the most incredible ways. -Huff.

More and more wounded arrived in blackened from

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bandage's blood. But they were in such a hurry that not a single one wanted to stop Yala dressing, they did not even have time to rest, take a sip of water from an army flask, eat a piece of bread and smoke a cigarette. What a horror they must be; survived.

Back, back! In order not to waste time, in order to quickly get away from this flurry of steel and lead, further from the front! This was their only wish. They did not yet know that there was a continuous front here, without beginning and without end.

Well, the Soviet command could not calmly watch how the "inveterate Nazis" fled to Denmark. General Galitsky was ordered to continue the offensive. The 11th Guards Army shed blood until April 30, advancing up to 40 kilometers. After that, due to heavy losses, it was withdrawn to the second echelon. According to Soviet data, from April 20 to April 30, the army destroyed more than 8,000 and captured 15,902 soldiers and officers, while itself losing about 8,000 people. And in just two weeks of battle, the army lost every fourth soldier and officer killed and wounded, the 23rd tank brigade lost 53 combat vehicles and lost more than a hundred tankers killed and wounded.

At the same time, the 19th and 5th Guards Tank Armies, the 98th Rifle Corps and the 1st Polish Tank Brigade, which were part of the 2nd Belorussian Front, did not stop trying to eliminate the forces of the army for a day. "East Prussia", entrenched in the Vistula Delta and on the Hel Spit.

At the end of April, the 43rd army of Beloborodov was transferred to the subordination of Marshal Rokossovsky, who received the task: "Destroy the enemy grouping to the west and southwest of the city of Danzig."

The battle for the Frische-Nerungs spit | In May, the 96th and 194th divisions of the 48th Army, the 4th assault engineering and sapper brigade, penal companies, the 343rd Guards heavy and 1050th self-propelled artillery regiments, various reinforcement units continued. These troops received powerful air and artillery support. The minesweeper division carried out transportation

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troops and equipment, armored boats provided fire support. Then the 17th Rifle Division was added to the battle. Displacing the enemy into the Vistula Delta, losing 200 men killed

every day, Soviet troops passed almost the entire spit. The end of the war found them in front of the village of Bodenwinkel, the foundation of the spit. German ships continued to evacuate the population, and the soldiers stubbornly clung to each position, waiting for their turn.

On May 9, Dietrich von Saucken gave the order to surrender and went to surrender. For three days, the troops of the 2nd and 3rd Belorussian fronts in the area of the mouth of the Vistula and on the Hel Spit received 55,000 prisoners.

VIENNA OPERATION

As already mentioned, on the evening of February 17, on the fourth day after the capture of Budapest, the Headquarters issued instructions to the commanders of the troops of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts on the preparation and conduct of offensive operations in the Bratislava-Brno and Vienna directions. At the same time, the 27th Army of Colonel General S.G. Trofimenko from February 20 was transferred from the 2nd Ukrainian Front to the 3rd Ukrainian Front, and the 46th Army of Lieutenant General A.V. Petrushevsky and the 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps, Lieutenant General K.V. Sviridov, on the contrary, they left Tolbukhin for Malinovsky.

The Danube military flotilla under the command of Rear Admiral G.N. Kholostyakova and the 83rd Separate Marine Rifle Brigade. In addition, from its reserve, the Headquarters allocated the 9th Guards Army to the front, which stood out for its unique staffing for that period - 10-11 thousand people in a division - and the selective quality of human material. The fact is that in October 1944 the army was formed as a Separate Airborne Corps consisting of the 37th, 38th, 39th Guards Airborne Corps and "was fully staffed with well-trained officers, sergeants and privates, which passed training course in combat operations behind enemy lines. Why Stalin needed such an army, history is silent. However, on December 18 of the same year, it was ordered to reorganize the

her in

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combined arms. Corps and divisions began to be called rifle. The armies issued large-caliber artillery and rocket launchers, three regiments of SU-76 self-propelled guns, vehicles, horses, and other weapons and property assigned to the infantry by the state. The Hero of the Soviet Union, Colonel-General V.V. was appointed commander. Glagolev, who, according to the description, "was distinguished by decisiveness, composure in a difficult combat situation and unbending will in achieving his goals." In general, the people of Warmia crept up desperate, today they would say, reckless.

The troops of Marshal Malinovsky were assigned the main role in the upcoming operation. Directive No. 11027 ordered the 2nd Ukrainian Front to prepare an attack north of the Danube on Nowe Zamky, Malacki, Znojmo with the forces of the 9th and 7th Guards, 53rd Combined Arms and 6th Guards Tank Armies and the Cavalry Mechanized Group. Simultaneously, along the right bank of the Danube, the 46th Army, reinforced by the 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps and the artillery division of the RGK, was to advance. Malinovsky was given the task of liberating Bratislava, occupying Brno and Znojmo no later than the twentieth day of the operation and, in cooperation with the 3rd Ukrainian Front, capturing Vienna. In the future, it was planned to develop the offensive in the general direction of Pilsen.

The 3rd Ukrainian Front was to strike with the forces of the 4th Guards, 26th and 27th Armies, reinforced by three breakthrough artillery divisions, from the Szekesfehervar area, in the direction of Papa, Szombathely, to defeat the enemy grouping north of Lake Balaton and in two weeks to reach the Austro-Hungarian frontier. At the same time, to the south of Lake Balaton, in order to capture the oil-bearing region of Nagykanizsa, the 57th Army of Colonel General M.N. went on the offensive. Sharokhina. In the future, the main forces of the front were supposed to develop a strike in the direction of Wiener Neustadt, St. Pölten to assist the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian Front in capturing Vienna.

Operationally subordinate to Marshal Tolbukhin, the 1st Bulgarian Army, commanded by General

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Lieutenant Vladimir Stoichev, was ordered to be used to provide the left wing of the front, deploying it along the northern bank of the Dratva River. To the left of it operated the 3rd Yugoslav Army under the command of Lieutenant General Kosta Naj.

The start of the offensive was scheduled for March 15. Preparations for it unfolded immediately. The coordination of the actions of the two fronts was entrusted to Marshal S.K. Timoshenko. However, after a few days the situation changed.

On February 17, the enemy from the Komarno area launched a surprise attack on the troops of the 7th Guards Army, who were defending a bridgehead on the right bank of the Gron River north of Esztergom. On February 24, the army was forced to retreat to the left bank, and General M.S. Shumilov "for carelessness and poor organization of defense" received a personal reprimand from the Supreme Commander-in-Chief. Soviet sources claim that the enemy threw about 400 tanks and assault guns into the battle, which, given the state of the German divisions, could not be physically possible. But it doesn't matter how the generals justify their defeat - bad weather or the power of the enemy. The real sensation was the news about the participation of the 1st and 12th SS Panzer divisions in the German counterattack. This meant that the 6th SS Panzer Army had materialized in Western Hungary.

Our strategists were expecting it anywhere—directly in the direction of Berlin, on the flanks of Konev or Zhukov—but not here. However, the Anglo-Americans thought the same way. So, on February 20, the Chief of Staff of the American Army, George Marshall, informed the Chief of the General Staff, General A.I. Antonov that the enemy is preparing for a counteroffensive and is creating two groupings on the Eastern Front: one in Pomerania for an attack on Thorn, the other in the area of Vienna, Moravska-Ostrava for an offensive in the direction of Lodz. At the same time, the inclusion of the 6th SS Panzer Army was supposed to be from the British included in the southern one. Similar information had previously been received command. says that when he owed to Moscow , Chief of Staff of the Front, General S.P. Ivanov about the concentration of cereals

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Noah tank grouping of the enemy in the area of Lake Balaton, he was considered a hoaxer:

“Even the Chief of the General Staff, General of the Army A.I. Antonov, talking on HF with the front commander F.I. Tolbukhin asked in bewilderment: “Who can believe that Hitler withdrew the 6th SS Panzer Army from the west and sent it against the 3rd Ukrainian Front, and not near Berlin, where the last operation to defeat the fascist troops is being prepared?” Indeed, it was hard to believe that the enemy, in conditions when the Soviet troops were 60 km from Berlin, would transfer their tank formations to Hungary and organize a counteroffensive there.”

None of the intelligence penetrated into another brilliant plan of Hitler, who ordered in the second half of January to send the SS army of Joseph Dietrich from the Ardennes to the southernmost sector of the Eastern Front.

The purpose of the operation, which was born in the head of the Fuhrer, with the code name "Spring Awakening" was: within 10-12 days, to smash the troops of Marshal Tolbukhin to smithereens and throw them back across the Danube. Then it was planned to transfer the tank divisions to the central direction.

Hitler asserted with aplomb that Stalin had a number of outstanding military leaders, but not a single strategist, because, if it were otherwise, “the Soviet strike would have been delivered not at the Baranovsky bridgehead, but in Hungary.” However, their own generals also poorly understood the Fuhrer. For example, the "father" of the SS troops, Oberstgruppenführer Paul Hausser:

"While the High Command of the Ground Forces proposed an operation to clamp the enemy into "pincers" from Silesia and Pomerania, the High Command of the Wehrmacht ordered the use of the army in Hungary. The outcome of the war was not decided here! Military and economic reasons, the oil of Lake Balaton was not a sufficient basis for such a strategy. Thus, at the end of January, an order was given to transfer the army from the Western Front. The situation on the railroad allowed only four echelons to be transported at the same time, so the army headquarters arrived in the Rab (Gyor) area on February 20, the last units only at the beginning of March.

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Or the Chief of the General Staff of the OKH:

"When I refuted the reasons of a military nature put forward by Hitler to justify my decision, he seized on the idea that the Hungarian oil reserves and refineries are of decisive importance for our industry, since the enemy destroyed our chemical plants with his air raids: "If you there will be no fuel, your tanks will not move, your planes will not fly. With this you must agree. But my generals don't understand anything about war economics." He was obsessed with this idea, and no one could convince him otherwise.

True, a few pages below, Guderian, analyzing the current situation, actually admitted that Hitler was right, it was just that the Prussian birch trees were dearer to the general than the Danube bank, and there was no longer any strength to save:

"Our military industry has suffered greatly. Particularly sensitive was the loss of synthetic fuel factories, on whose work the fuel supply of our army mainly depended. On January 13, the Pelitz (Police) plant near Stettin was destroyed. On January 14, the enemy bombed the oil depots near Magdeburg, Derben, Emen and Braunschweig, the Lane factories and the fuel and lubricants plant in Mannheim, and on January 15, the benzene plants near Bochum and Recklinghausen. In addition, the Geide oil refinery in Denmark was destroyed on 14 January. According to our reports, the Allies lost 57 aircraft during the bombing, we lost 236 aircraft. Now, after the failure of most of our fuel and lubricants plants, the command had only oil fields in Zistersdorf (Austria) and in the area of Lake Balaton (Hungary). This circumstance explains to some extent why Hitler decided to transfer the main forces that he managed to withdraw from the Western Front to Hungary in order to keep in his hands the last oil production areas and the Hungarian oil refineries, equally important for the production of necessary for the armored forces and the air force".

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As General of the Army Shtemenko writes, Hungarian oil has acquired "the value of the elixir of life" for the Wehrmacht.

In addition, Hitler hatched a plan to organize a long-term resistance under his personal leadership in the so-called "Alpine fortress", which included the territories of Austria, Bavaria and the adjacent regions of Italy and the Czech Republic. For the success of the enterprise, it was necessary at all costs to keep the oil fields and factories of Western Hungary, preserve the Austrian military industry and restore the defensive "perimeter" along the Danube, which was a serious water barrier. As a last resort, Berlin could be surrendered in order for the allies to grapple with each other somewhere on the Elbe. The Fuhrer had no doubt that this would certainly happen. In case of the fall of the capital, it was planned to form army groups "North" and "South". Admiral Doenitz was to assume full military power in northern Germany. In the Alps, in the refuge of Berchtesgaden, it was supposed to deploy the headquarters of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief to lead the Southern Front.

The most fantastic rumors spread about the impregnable fortress created by the Nazis in the Bavarian Alps, on the basis of which intelligence reports were compiled in the style of James Bond novels:

"Here, under the cover of natural defensive obstacles reinforced by the most effective secret weapons ever created by man, the surviving forces that have hitherto ruled Germany will begin her rebirth; here weapons will be manufactured in factories located in bomb shelters; food and equipment will be stored in vast underground niches, and a specially formed corps of young men will be trained in guerrilla warfare so that a whole underground army can be trained and sent to liberate Germany from the occupiers of it.

strength."

After the "inevitable" collapse of the anti-Hitler coalition, it was planned to conclude a separate peace with one of the parties.

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At the same time, if the generals of the Wehrmacht and Himmler's department, frightening the world with the threat of the Bolshevization of Europe, hoped to find understanding in the West, then the gaze of the author of Mein Kampf habitually turned to the East. Guided through life by "magic forces", he saw that two proletarian states with identical totalitarian regimes, led by workers' parties with popular leaders, would more quickly find a common language in order to jointly resist the claims of the British and American "plutocrats". And stormy applause and universal approval of the working people on this occasion will easily be provided by the departments of Comrades Beria and Himmler, Goebbels and Shcherbakov.

But first, the Red Army had to be given a good bloodletting.

"The Fuhrer is convinced," Goebbels outlined, "that if any power in the enemy camp wants to be the first to negotiate with us, then under any circumstances it will be the Soviet Union. Stalin is experiencing very great difficulties in his relations with the Anglo-Americans, and besides, he is now at the head of one of the states that wants to return home with spoils of war, like us. So the day will come when he will get tired of the eternal disputes with the Anglo-Americans, and he will look for other opportunities ...

But the prerequisite for our negotiations with one side or the other is military success. Stalin also needs to suffer before he wants to deal with us. The Führer rightly emphasizes that Stalin would most likely have been able to effect a change in the course of military policy, for he does not need to pay attention to public opinion in his country. It is otherwise with England. It does not matter at all whether Churchill is inclined to pursue a different war policy: even if he wanted to, he could not. It is too dependent on internal political forces, which in their majority are already half Bolshevikized. Roosevelt does not even have the slightest intention to follow this path.

The Fuehrer is thinking of finding a way to negotiate with the Soviet Union and then continue the war with England with the most brutal energy.

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General Raus writes about the same thing: "He stubbornly believed that his main enemy was in the west, while the German military leadership, for all its hatred of the Western powers, still considered Russia to be the main enemy."

Thus, the need for "Awakening" was justified not only by military and economic, but also by strategic considerations. Therefore, half of all German tank divisions that fought on the Eastern Front, the best SS units, ended up in Hungary.

The idea was to deliver three blows in converging directions.

It was planned to strike the main blow with the forces of the 6th Field Army and the 6th SS Panzer Army between the lakes Velence and Balaton in a southeast direction in order to divide the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian Front into two parts, reach the Danube at section of Dunapentele, Dunaföldvár and capture bridgeheads on the left bank. Subsequently, the troops of the 6th SS Panzer Army were to advance north and south along the right bank of the Danube.

The second strike was supposed to take place in the zone of the 1st Bulgarian Army by the forces of the 91st Army Corps of Army Group E from the Doni-Miklós region to the north, towards Dietrich's tanks.

The third blow was planned to be delivered by the 2nd Panzer Army from the Nagykanizsa region to Kaposvár. However, the army of Maximilian de Angelis did not have a single tank division. By active actions, it fettered the forces of the 57th Army, in the rear of which the German "pincers" were to close.

From the air, the attack was covered by the aircraft of the 4th Air Fleet.

In total, taking into account the units of the 3rd Hungarian Army, operationally subordinated to General Balk, and the troops of Army Group E, operating on the right bank of the Dráva, the enemy, according to Soviet estimates, had 31 divisions in the zone of the 3rd Ukrainian Front, including 1 tank, 5 battle groups and a motorized brigade. This grouping consisted of 43 thousand people, 5630 guns and mortars, 877 tanks and assault guns, 850 aircraft.

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The movement and concentration of the 6th SS Army was carried out in compliance with all secrecy measures. To make it difficult to identify formations, divisional badges were painted over on the equipment transferred to Hungary, the SS men were ordered to take off their armbands, the army itself was called the headquarters of the senior chief of engineering troops in the documents, and individual formations were called construction and training units. Hitler feared that the Russians would not guess ahead of time about his intentions and would not prepare for a rebuff. However, the whole complex of measures was crossed out by the attack of the 1st Panzer Corps of the Gruppenführer Prissau of the Gron River.

In the second half of February, the Soviet command had reliable information that a large, mainly tank, enemy grouping was concentrated in Western Hungary. On February 21, the head of the Main Intelligence Directorate of the Red Army, Lieutenant General I.I. Ilyichev presented a report confirming that "the entire 6th SS Panzer Army is heading to Hungary." And it was clear that something bad was going on here. In the current situation, the Headquarters ordered Tolbukhin, without stopping the preparation of the offensive, to take measures to repel a possible enemy counterattack. Thus, the front had to prepare for both defensive and offensive operations: to create a "deep defense, especially strong in anti-tank terms", and at the same time save people, equipment and ammunition for an attack on Vienna.

By the beginning of March, as part of the 3rd Ukrainian Front (4th Guards, 27th, 26th, 57th, 1st Bulgarian, 17th Air Armies, 18th and 23rd Tank Armies, 1st Guards Mechanized - ny, 5th guards cavalry corps - 37 rifle, 3 cavalry, 6 Bulgarian infantry divisions, 1 fortified area, 1 cavalry, 1 mechanized, 2 tank corps, 1 mechanized and 1 self-propelled artillery brigade) there were 566 thousand soldiers and officers, 6889

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guns and mortars, 399 tanks and self-propelled guns, 965 aircraft.

From this, our historians concluded that "the overall balance of forces in people, artillery and aircraft was almost equal, but in terms of tanks and self-propelled artillery installations, the enemy

more than doubled." The assertion that 431 thousand is approximately equal to 566 thousand looks disputable. The Yugoslav army, which had eight divisions, is not taken into account at all. All German armored vehicles are considered serviceable, although in fact there were 580 combat-ready vehicles, including ZSU, including 35 "tigers". As for the Soviet side, only serviceable equipment is taken into account. Considering that the German pilots and tank crews experienced chronic problems with fuel and ammunition, the Russians were on the defensive, and the element of surprise was lost by the Germans, everything looks not so sad.

Since it was an impossible task for Soviet intelligence to "reveal the enemy's plan" (although General Shtemenko claims the opposite in hindsight), Tolbukhin's headquarters, by checking the terrain for patency and tank accessibility, calculated the two most probable directions of the German offensive - to the north Szekesfehervara on Budapest and between lakes Velence and Balaton on Dunapentel. In addition, here the enemy was 25-30 kilometers from the Danube. The first option seemed preferable.

In accordance with the adopted "doctrine", the main efforts of the front troops were concentrated in the bands that covered these areas, the 4th Guards Army (20th, 21st, 31st Guards Rifle Corps, 1st Guards Fortified Area) Lieutenant General N. D. Zakhvataev and the 26th Army (30th, 104th, 135th Rifle Corps) Lieutenant General N.A. Hagen. In the second echelon was the 27th Army (35th Guards, 33rd, 37th Rifle Corps) of Colonel General S.G. Trofimenko. The 57th Army (6th Guards, 64th Rifle Corps) and the 1st Bulgarian Army (3rd, 4th Infantry Corps) held a 200-kilometer line: Lake Bala

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ton, Babocha and further along the left bank of the Dratva River. At the beginning of March, a defense sufficiently developed in terms of engineering and echeloned to a depth of 30-50 kilometers was prepared. The tactical zone consisted of two lanes 10-15 kilometers deep. Company anti-tank strongholds were created with 3-5 guns and 4-6 anti-tank rifles, battalion anti-tank units, anti-tank areas and mobile anti-tank reserves, about 30 thousand anti-tank mines were planted, 68 mobile obstacle detachments were formed. In the 83-kilometer strip from Gant to Lake Balaton, 4,400 guns and mortars, 339 rocket launchers were concentrated. The total operational density of artillery in the most important areas was 60-70 guns and mortars, anti-tank guns - 20-25, the density of minefields in some areas - 2700 anti-tank and 2500 anti-personnel mines per kilometer. Soviet troops occupied the first, second and rear lanes. The highest density of defense was created at the turn of Gant - Lake Velence, that is, in the zone of the 4th Guards Army, where the division accounted for an average of 3.3 kilometers, to the south the operational density of formations was lower - 4.5 - 6.5 kilometers per division.

The Front Commander's reserve included the 18th and 23rd Tank, 1st Guards Mechanized, 5th Guards Cavalry, 133rd Rifle Corps, and six artillery brigades. True, during the battle for Budapest, the armored forces suffered significant losses, did not have time to fully recover, and together they totaled 189 medium tanks and 210 self-propelled artillery installations.

The 17th Air Army, commanded by Colonel General V.A. Sudets, had the task of conducting reconnaissance, striking at enemy troops, covering front formations from the air. The Danube military flotilla transported goods across the Danube in the interests of two fronts and carried out trawling of the river.

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The battle began on the night of March 6 on the southern sector of the front, where the enemy inflicted two blows with three infantry divisions: the first - from the Doni-Mikholyats area against the troops of the 1st Bulgarian,

the second - from the Valpovo region in units of the 3rd Yugoslav Army. With a sudden attack, without artillery preparation, the Germans forced the Dratva and captured two bridgeheads on its northern coast, up to 8 kilometers along the front and 5 kilometers in depth each. There was a threat of the enemy's exit to the crossings on the Danube and the rear of the 57th Army. Therefore, Tolbukhin ordered the 133rd Rifle Corps, Major General P.A., to be moved out of his reserve. Artyushchenko and, having organized a counterattack in cooperation with the Bulgarian and Yugoslav troops, restore the situation. The counter-attack was not successful, but the further advance of the Germans in this area was stopped.

The second blow followed at 7 o'clock in the morning by the forces of the 2nd Panzer Army along the railway to Kaposvar, Dombóvár. Having brought about 70 tanks and self-propelled guns into battle, they wedged into the defenses of the 57th Army in a narrow area to a depth of 5 kilometers, but were stopped by counterattacks of the second echelons of divisions, strong artillery fire and raids by the 189th assault air division. At the same time, as part of the Soviet 64th Rifle Corps, the Bulgarian 12th infantry division.

Finally, at 8.45 am, on the sector between lakes Velence and Balaton, the main forces went over to the offensive — the 6th SS Panzer Army (1st Cavalry, 403rd People's Artillery, | and 2nd Panzer Corps SS) and the 3rd Panzer Corps of the 6th Army.

Dietrich's army descended to the southeast along the wide Sharviz canal, which divided the Soviet bridgehead into two parts. The 1st Cavalry Corps (3rd, 4th Cavalry Divisions, 25th Hungarian Infantry) and the 1st SS Panzer Corps (1st SS Panzer Division "Leibstandarte" Adolf Hitler", [2nd SS Panzer Division "Hitler Youth", 501st SS Heavy Tank Battalion, 560th Tank Destroyer Battalion). This

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The strike force was to link up with the forces of Army Group "HER" advancing from the south.

The 2nd SS Panzer Corps (2nd SS Panzer Division "Reich", 9th SS Panzer Division "Hohenstaufen", 44th Infantry Division) was to advance through Aba along the east bank of the canal. His task was to reach the Danube at Dunapentele and Dunafelvar.

The 6th Panzer Division remained in the army reserve.

The task of the 3rd tank corps (1st, 3rd, 23rd tank, 356th infantry divisions, battalion of the 24th tank regiment, 509th heavy tank battalion, 219th assault tank battalion) was to break through east and, providing flank cover for the main strike force, organize a cut-off position with a front to the north between Lake Velence and the Danube.

Each of the tank corps had 120-150 combat-ready tanks, fighters and assault guns. Each SS division had 17-19 thousand personal composition.

The 4th SS Panzer Corps (3rd SS Panzer Division "Totenkopf", 5th SS Panzer Division "Viking", 2nd Hungarian Panzer Division) Obergruppenführer Herbert Gille remained on the defensive in the area of Szekesfehervar and with the benefit of - a pleasant development was to join the attack on Budapest.

To the north of Szekesfehervar, the 3rd Hungarian Army was on the defensive.

If Soviet sources claim that there was a powerful 30-minute artillery preparation and air support from the enemy, then Hausser swears: "The offensive began without artillery preparation and without any air support ... The weather and terrain were not favorable operations."

Nevertheless, formations of the 3rd tank corps of General Hermann Breit found a weak link in the Soviet defense, hitting the junction of the 4th Guards and 26th armies, which was covered by the bullets of the 1st Guards fortified area of General Nikitin, who had in the presence of 3130 fighters and 4 three-inch

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movki. The guardsmen were taken by surprise and, not showing "proper stability", fled towards the town of Sheregeyesh and further, exposing the right flank of the 155th Infantry Division. An important node of the Soviet defense was captured by the Germans in the first half of the day. The counterattack, organized by Divisional Commander-155 with the support of the 110th Tank Brigade, failed.

The 2nd SS Panzer Corps of Gruppenführer Willy Bietrich, not having time to fully concentrate, launched an attack with only a part of his forces and did not achieve success.

The 1st SS Panzer Corps ran into the prepared defenses of the 68th Guards, 233rd and 74th Rifle Divisions. The SS men failed to break through it - the advance was about 4 kilometers. The Germans were really unlucky with the weather. The thaw hit, heavy combat vehicles sank in the mud, the infantry went on the attack without the support of armored vehicles and suffered unjustified losses. Although, in comparison with other areas, the defense here was the weakest, since the Soviet command considered that, due to the beginning of the flood of spring waters, this area was the least suitable for the massive use of armored vehicles.

Deciding that the enemy was inflicting the main blow in the zone of the 1st Guards UR, Marshal Tolbukhin ordered the 18th Tank Corps of Major General P.D. Govorunenko, reinforced by the 208th self-propelled artillery brigade - a total of 62 "thirty-four" and 96 self-propelled guns, including 63 of the latest self-propelled "St. John's wort" SU-100. This 2000-meter combat vehicle confidently hit any German tank, but did not have defensive machine-gun armament. The 3rd Guards Airborne Division of the 35th Guards Rifle Corps of the 27th Army was also sent here.

However, the next day, the enemy attack followed south of Sheregelesh, where all serviceable forces - 147 tanks and self-propelled guns - went on the offensive of the 2nd SS Panzer Corps. But even here the "blitzkrieg" failed. Division Commander "Hohenstaufen" Brigadeführer Sylvester Stadler Doc

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got along: "A massive tank attack was impossible. The whole area is turned into liquid mud, in which everything is drowning. Obersturmbannführer Telkamp, a professional tank commander, personally led the battle of the best company and had to inform me that his regiment could not be used, as the heavy vehicles were sinking in the mud. After two tanks plunged almost up to the turret, the attack on the broad front of the advancing infantry could only be supported by one tank company operating along the only road in our offensive zone. In order to "saddle" this road, the Soviet command hastily regrouped part of the forces of the 18th Tank Corps with a regiment of SU-100 self-propelled guns. During the day, the Germans captured Ab, but were stopped in front of the town of Sharkerestur.

The greatest success was achieved by the II SS Panzer Corps - 140 tanks and self-propelled guns, advancing along the western bank of the Sharviz Canal. On the morning of March 7, fierce battles unfolded in the Kalosa area. Here the regiments of the 43rd anti-tank artillery brigade covered themselves with glory. Unable to withstand the German attack, the Soviet infantry retreated, leaving the gunners without cover, and they held down the enemy forces for several hours. On this day in 1964, 1965, 1966, the IPTAPs knocked out and burned 44 tanks, losing 32 guns, 3 tractors and 4 trucks. Nevertheless, parts of the Leibstandarte division managed to break through the second line of defense of the 68th Guards Rifle Division, Major General I.M. Nekrasov and forced her to retreat to the eastern bank of the canal.

In order to strengthen the defense, on the instructions of the front commander, formations of the 27th Army and three anti-tank artillery regiments advanced to the second lane south of Lake Velence. To the east of Sheregelesh, an artillery group consisting of 160 guns and mortars took up positions. The 1st Guards Mechanized Corps of Lieutenant General I.N. was redeployed to the Sharbogard area. Russiyanova, who had in service 48 foreign cars M4A2 "Sherman" and 17 domestic SU-100. At the turn of Shimontornya, Ozora, along the eastern bank of the Shavriz canal and the southern bank of the Shiio canal, the 5th Guards Donskoy Kava lined up

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Leri Corps Major General S.I. Gorshkov. Two regiments of the 208th SU-100 self-propelled brigade, confiscated from General Govorunenko, were also sent here.

To improve command and control, on March 8, the front commander assigned the defense of the sector south of Lake Velence and up to the Sharviz Canal to the 27th Army. General Grofimenko subordinated all formations defending in this sector - the 30th Rifle Corps, the 1st Guards Fortified Area, as well as the 18th Tank, 1st Guards Mechanized and transferred from the 4th Guards Guards Army 23rd Tank Corps Lieutenant General A.O. Akhmanov. The corps had 23 tanks and 10 heavy self-propelled guns. The 26th Army defended the section from the Shavriz Canal to Lake Balaton, and the divisions of the 33rd Rifle Corps were pulled up here from behind the Danube. The 209th self-propelled artillery brigade was transferred to the submission of General Hagen from the reserve of the front.

On March 9, the enemy continued to attack. The 2nd SS Corps made its way to Charsentagote. In order to delay the German advance in this area, engineer and sapper assault units were introduced into the battle, carrying out "impudent" mining under the noses of German tankers, the 1964th IPTAP and two divisions of captured self-propelled guns - 150-mm howitzers "Hummel" (8 units) and 88-mm Nashorn fighters (bedinits). Trophies with red stars all remained on the battlefield. Three more kilometers traveled by the Germans also cost a lot: the commander of the Reich division, Gruppenführer Werner Ostendorf, was mortally wounded.

Unfortunately, the memoirs of the Soviet commanders who participated in this hardest battle are absolutely empty in terms of information, filled with stories about the exploits and "heroic actions" of individual soldiers and commanders, sometimes turning into outright anecdotes. General Russiyanov had a special love for bikes:

"When the observers reported to the Guard Lieutenant Colonel Leshchenko (commander of the 18th Guards Tank Regiment) that German infantry was accumulating behind the nearest high-rise, the regiment commander called the drivers of two tractors, Sergeants Frolov and Shchekin, and ordered them to bypass the high-rise, hit

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rear of the enemy. At low speed, along a shallow snow-covered hollow, tractors with a landing of machine gunners bypassed the height and at full speed moved straight towards the unsuspecting Nazis. Shchekin and Frolov crushed the enemy soldiers with caterpillars, and machine gunners destroyed them with well-aimed bursts.

The shock detachment of the Nazis was dispersed, his attack was thwarted.

Soon, Leshchenko's tankers received a very important task of commanding the corps. The head of intelligence became aware that the Nazis had new small arms. Naturally, we needed to get some samples. Therefore, Leshchenko was ordered to take several "tongues" with weapons.

The task was completed by Captain Borovsky. On a tank tractor, the captain crashed into the formation of the attackers and began to "catch" tongues. Borovsky and two guards who helped him grabbed the Nazis by the heads (!) and pulled them into the tractor - the legs of the captives stuck out over the side of the car. Just like that

seven people were seized in this way - all of them were armed with automatic rifles of a new, then unknown to us type.

In the battles that flared up in the area between the two lakes, the guardsmen of the corps fought as selflessly and skillfully as before.

So, driving tractors in combat formations of the attacking SS men, crushing them with caterpillars and grabbing "by the heads", the 1st Guards Mechanized Corps skillfully fought. It is not clear why he is still not in Berlin?

On the western bank of the Sharviz Canal, having broken through the intermediate defensive line of the 26th Army in the evening, the advanced units of the Leibstandarte started fighting with the 11th Guards Cavalry Division in Shimontornja. The Hitler Youth grenadiers advancing on the right along a parallel road captured Deg and rushed to Igar.

V.V. Bykov near Shimontornya was not a general, but Vaska-platoon in an anti-tank regiment, where "the BARREL is long, but life is short":

, ' "The roar from the sky breaks off, then reappears. Barely alone

to wow, t -

"Messer" comes out of the dive, as another falls from above and pounding from machine guns. I don't remember, wow, they flew away or even dived, but we started to put out the fire. And then we heard that something much more terrible was approaching us. The earth trembles, and in the ears there is a familiar rumble and clang. As the wind carried the smoke from the burning rockets, I glanced at the road nearby. And I must say, we took up positions in this way: two batteries - on one side, three - on the other. It was called "saddle the road". So, I see, on the other side, behind the landing, a herd of tanks is moving.

The herd showed up. No battle formation. Gurt. They go like cows to water. Only the front ones fire cannons. So, without stopping, they trampled half the positions of our regiment, crushed everything - both guns, and machines, and people. It was as if they didn't exist. The battalion commander, senior lieutenant, runs up to me and shouts: "Pull out the guns! Customize the car! Let's get out of here!" The "students" drove up, pulled out the dug-in guns - and we shake. The regimental commander orders on the radio: to advance across the tanks. And we got into the swampy bushes, the cars were loaded, we pulled out with difficulty. Then we press on steep slopes, through thickets of oak forest. It was too late to take up positions, and the German tanks covered us with fire just on the field slope, which was easily shot through from the village they had captured. We had twenty cars, fewer guns - two batteries. And we decided to break through one by one. "Studer" accelerates and rushes along the slope at top speed. And from the tanks they shoot at him. One will slip, the other will be killed. I skipped. Others were knocked out and burnt ...

A day later it turned out that in the regiment there was one of my cannons with a "student", a radio station and a staff car. The rest of those who survived chose other directions, because it was impossible for everyone to get out together.

It seemed that the Soviet defense was about to collapse: all the army and front reserves were used up. According to S.M. Shtemenko, the commander of the front, phoned Stalin and asked if his troops were standing in

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As a last resort, the headquarters should retreat to the left bank of the Danube so as not to lose control:

"I.V. Stalin listened to the considerations of the commander of the 3rd Ukrainian Front, hesitated a bit and in an even voice said something like the following:

- Comrade Tolbukhin, if you are thinking of dragging out the war for another five or six months, then, of course, withdraw your troops across the Danube. It will definitely be quieter there. But I doubt that you think so. Therefore, you should defend yourself on the right bank of the river, and you and your headquarters should be there. I am sure that the troops will fulfill their difficult tasks with honor. You just need to lead them well."

Then Tolbukhin proposed to bring into battle the 9th Guards Army, which had been transferred to the front the day before. But even this was denied to him. By a special directive, the Headquarters forbade the involvement of Glagolev's army in defensive battles and ordered the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian Front, having exhausted the enemy, to go on the offensive north of Lake Balaton no later than March 15-16. However, they did not leave the marshal without help: by the morning of March 10, the 209th self-propelled artillery brigade, sent from the 2nd Ukrainian Front, deployed at the positions of the cavalry corps - three more regiments of SU-100. The 5th Air Army received the task of joint operations with the 17th Air Army.

On March 10, the situation worsened as the Germans brought the 1st SS Panzer Corps of the 23rd Panzer Division into battle. She took up defense along the western bank of the Sharviz Canal, while the Hitler Youth and the Leibstandarte attacked Ozora and Shimontornya, in the area of which there were crossings over the Shio Canal. The Soviet cavalrymen, the 202nd Rifle Division and SU-100 regiments, which came to the rescue, fought off all attacks for two days. However, on the night of March 13, the SS managed to cross the canal, occupy Simontornya and form a bridgehead on the south coast, creating a direct threat to the rear of the 57th and 26th armies.

'Another foothold west of the Mezokomari unexpected

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attack captured the 1st cavalry corps of General Gustav Hartenek.

At the same time, in the zone of the 27th Army, units of the 3rd Tank Corps struck along the shore of Lake Velence and on March 10 again broke through the defenses of the 1st Guards fortified area. In a rage, Tolbukhin ordered the formation to be disbanded, and its personnel to be transferred to the staffing of rifle divisions. To cover the gap, General Trofimenko sent the 78th Rifle Division and the 181st Tank Brigade of the 18th Tank Corps, and Tolbukhin - the 23rd Tank Corps - 36 "thirty-fours" and 11 heavy self-propelled guns, which was reinforced by the 207th self-propelled artillery brigade - 63 SU-100 units. On the morning of March 11, German tanks attacked their positions in large numbers, with the "Royal Tigers" in front. The defense of the rifle units was crushed, and they, traditionally abandoning their self-propelled guns without cover, retreated 1.5–2 kilometers. The 1011th self-propelled artillery regiment stood in the way of the German wedge to death. Almost all of it burned down in battle, having chalked up 38 destroyed enemy tanks. Several attacks were beaten off by "thirty-fours" from Akhmanov's corps.

The Soviet infantry, which consisted mainly of conscripts recruited in the occupied territories and former "Eastern workers", was poorly trained and unstable.

From the observations of Senior Lieutenant P.V. Zlotov:

"The infantry in this area was even more cowardly. As soon as the enemy opens automatic fire on our trenches, everyone jumps out of the trenches: a rifle is dragged by the belt and, bending over, runs away, although the trenches have been dug out to their full height and automatic fire is absolutely harmless in them. Then the commanders of platoons, companies take stakes and with a great obscenity thrash them on the shoulders and asses, driving them back into the trenches. But in vain: while the enemy is shooting, do not drive them away - they are beaten, they are silent. If they can kill them to death, they won't get up, but as soon as the fire stops, they themselves return to the trench. Moreover, while running, many are injured by enemy fire. This is the latest replenishment received from the

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of the western regions of Ukraine: all elderly, with mustaches-staples. True, Zlotov makes special mention of another contingent, the conscription of 1944, when seventeen-year-olds were taken to war: "But what kind of soldiers were in the company? At first we thought that these were pioneer girls: small sprouts, overcoats to toe, a girlish voice. But when they met, they found out that they were still guys, all sixteen or seventeen years old, all with machine guns. The old men were frightened of the shots, sitting in the trenches, and the children in full growth go to the most experienced enemy and drive him away with relatively small losses. De-*TI are braver because they are more honest."

On Sunday evening, March 11, Dr. Goebbels looked into Hitler's bunker to report on his trip to Lauban and dream together:

"Our offensive in Hungary is yielding slow but sure results. In general, the development of events there can be called favorable, we have made significant progress. We have also moved forward near Lake Velen-Tse, so now we can talk about a really big offensive ...

The Führer believes that from now on we must widely propagate the idea of revenge on the Soviets. We must now throw our offensive forces to the east. Everything is decided in the East. The Soviets must pay with blood for blood, then, perhaps, it will be possible to reason with the Kremlin. Our troops are now obliged to endure and overcome the fear of Bolshevism. If we really go over to a massive offensive, we will succeed, as evidenced by the development of events in Hungary, which the Führer considers very promising. It remains to be hoped that it will continue to be so in the future.

So, our goal should have been to drive the Soviets in the east back, inflicting the heaviest losses in manpower and equipment on them. Then the Kremlin, perhaps, would have shown more compliance towards us. A separate peace with him would, of course, radically change the military situation. Naturally, this would not be the achievement of our goals [194] of the year, but the Führer still hopes to achieve

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the division of Poland, annex Hungary and Croatia to the German sphere of influence and get a free hand to conduct operations in the west. Such a goal is certainly worth the effort. Ending the war in the east to start operations in the west - what a great idea! Therefore, the Führer also believes that vengeance against the East and hatred against the West should be preached. After all, it was the West that caused this war and brought it to such terrible proportions. To him we owe our ruined cities and cultural monuments lying in ruins. And if the Anglo-Americans could be driven back, with cover from the east, then, no doubt, the goal would be achieved, which is to drive England out of Europe for all time as a troublemaker.

The program presented to me by the Führer here is grandiose and convincing. It lacks so far the opportunity for realization. This possibility must first be created by our soldiers in the east. As a prerequisite for its implementation, several impressive victories are needed; and, judging by the current situation, they are probably achievable. For this, everything must be done. For this we must work, for this we must fight, and for this we must by all means raise the morale of our people to the previous level."

The psychotherapeutic session went perfectly, Goebbels left in complete delight:

"I am very happy that the Fuhrer is physically and spiritually in exceptional shape, that he maintains clarity of mind and steadfastness."

The Reichsminister did not yet know that the offensive in Hungary had in fact already failed. In seven days of fierce fighting, German troops advanced 20-30 kilometers along a narrow sector of the front. However, the tanks never reached the Danube. On March 12, Tolbukhin began a regrouping of forces on the right wing of the front, gathering his fist for an attack on Vienna. 4th Guards Army in

did not take part in repelling the German strike, its losses on that day were: 4 killed, 22 wounded. To the right of her occupied the allotted

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lane of the 9th Guards Army. For replenishment, the Don Cavalry Corps was assigned to the rear.

On March 13 and the following days, the 1st SS Corps, trying to "open" the bridgehead, unsuccessfully fought for Hill 220, two kilometers south of Simontornya. The height repeatedly passed from hand to hand, it came to hand-to-hand fights:

"Enemy tankers no longer attacked. One must think that they completed their task and were transferred to another section. And here the German and our infantry thrashed each other, the heights passed from hand to hand several times. I was under one of the heights with my gun, and this, perhaps, saved both me and my soldiers. Because those who occupied positions behind us, the Germans covered with their fire, but they did not notice us, who were under their noses. Lieutenant Colonel Ovcharov, Captain Kovalev, two platoon officers, and many soldiers perished in those battles. There was a moment when the infantry ran, leaving my platoon and gun without cover, which we could not roll out of the artillery trench. Luckily for us, the fog rolled in and covered us like a curtain of smoke... Actually, the cover was a self-propelled gun that burned down on the first day. It covered our position from the side of the canal, from where the Germans fired. However, they were not the only ones to be feared. We were often mistakenly bombed by "maize" planes of the women's aviation regiment. Every night they hung lanterns-rockets in the sky and started dropping bombs. It's good that at least they didn't do it on purpose - they just unloaded ... And in between the bombings

: the political officer Major Tskvitaria came, he read and explained

We receive orders from the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, appeals

: Military Council, which boiled down to one thing: not a step on-

| ass! When the planes flew in, the major immediately rushed to the walk.

; He was fat and clumsy, in a narrow shelter, along with all-

'mi didn't fit. And then he raised his voice: "I am the deputy commander of the regiment, I am jumping asvabadyt places! .."

I feel the unspoken question: were you afraid? Certainly,

, was afraid. Maybe sometimes he was a coward. But fears in war, generally speaking, are many, and they are all very different. Fear overwhelmed him

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tsami - could be taken prisoner, shot; fear of enemy fire, especially of artillery raids and bombardments. If the breaks are nearby, the body itself - without the participation of the mind - falls to the ground, and the heart is ready to burst from painful forebodings. But there was another fear, coming, so to speak, from behind - from the authorities, from all those punitive bodies, of which there were no less in the war than in peacetime. Maybe even more. When the commander threatens to shoot you if you do not take the abandoned farm, height or trench (and this threat was quite real), then it is not yet known who you will be more afraid of - the Germans or the commander. Enemies can miss. And our own - the commanders (or the tribunal, if it comes to it) - these will not give a miss. Everything here is definite and categorical."

By the way, Bykov mentions detachments deployed in the area of the Danube crossings.

On March 14, in the zone of the 2nd SS Panzer Corps, Dietrich brought into action his last reserve - the 6th Panzer Division, reinforced by a Panther battalion. The division attacked from the Sheregelesh region to the southeast, but it also got stuck in the mud and the Soviet defenses. By this time, the density of artillery in some directions exceeded 160-170 barrels per kilometer of the front, aviation of the 17th Air Army made 5277 sorties, and ambushes hit T-34 and SU-100 Panzers. Moreover, the tank and mechanized corps were constantly replenished with new or repaired equipment, so at the end of the battle they had more combat vehicles than they had at the beginning. For example, there were 60 Shermans in Russiyanov's corps. Only brigades of "hundreds" suffered irreparable losses of material, often due to the illiteracy of commanders who used self-propelled guns "in a tank way": throwing them on the attack or using them for independent reconnaissance in combat.

"Sepp" Dietrich, already in captivity, testified about the failed "Spring Awakening" as follows:

"When the tanks were brought into action to develop the initial success, the terrain turned out to be completely impassable. The land that was considered frozen, and the area that

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General Weller supported the rue as if it were passable, but it turned out to be wet and swampy. Because of the secrecy regime, I was forbidden to conduct reconnaissance. As a result, 132 tanks got bogged down in the mud and | 5 "Royal Tigers" drowned up to the tower, respectively, the offensive could only be continued by infantry.

But the SS infantry was not the same as on the Kursk Bulge.

"The offensive we finally launched in Hungary," recalls Guderian, "was initially successful. However, the slush caused by mild weather hindered the advance of the tanks, which cast doubt on the possibility of continuing the offensive. If we managed to advance somewhat to the north of Lake Balaton, then to the south of it the offensive immediately stalled ...

Finally, all chances for a major success disappeared. The high morale of the SS divisions, which had been preserved until now, was lost. Under the cover of stubbornly fighting tankers, in defiance of orders, whole formations retreated. These divisions could no longer be relied upon."

These days, German air reconnaissance recorded the movement of large mechanized columns moving from Budapest to Zamol. It was the troops of the 9th Guards Army that were advancing to the front line. The intentions of the Russians were clearly visible: to deliver a flank attack and intercept the communications of the German troops.

It followed on March 16, when, after powerful artillery and aviation preparation, the 4th and 9th Guards Armies went on the offensive. Under the threat of encirclement, the 6th SS Panzer Army began a retreat to the Veszprem-Papa-Tarkany line.

According to the reports of the Soviet staffs, the combined arms armies alone, excluding tank corps and other front-line units, destroyed and captured 729 enemy tanks and self-propelled guns during March 6-14. Undoubtedly, not even double, but triple accounting takes place here. Thus, the 17th Air Army, which played an important role in repelling German attacks, only on March 12-13 chalked up 54 units of "destroyed" armored vehicles. Arrived from Moscow

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At the end of March, the commission took into account 968 enemy tanks and self-propelled guns of almost all types and designs that were in service with the Wehrmacht, burned, drowned in mud, abandoned due to lack of fuel in the area of Velence and Balaton in January-March 1945 (and didn't find any

one tank destroyed by aircraft). The power of the German tank formations was finally undermined. The disorganized industry of the Reich was unable to make up for these losses. If in February 168 Panthers and Jagdpanthers left the assembly lines, then in March - 46, and in April the MAN company managed to assemble only 20 cars. On March 31, Henschel delivered the final batch of 13 King Tigers to the troops.

According to official data, the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian Front lost almost 33 thousand people killed and wounded. Some modern researchers are sure that one and a half times more.

The enemy is over 40,000 soldiers and officers, over 300 guns and mortars, about 500 tanks and self-propelled guns, about 500 armored personnel carriers and 50 aircraft.

Thus ended the last offensive of the Wehrmacht in World War II.

By mid-March, the formations of Army Group South went on the defensive: the 8th Army - north of the Danube, the 6th field, 6th SS Panzer Army and the 3rd Hungarian Army - on the front from Esztergom to Lake Balaton. The Esztergom sector, Szekesfehervar was held by the 8th Hungarian Army Corps and the 4th SS Panzer Corps. The western shore of Lake Balaton was occupied by units of the 2nd Hungarian Corps, to the south were the positions of the 2nd German Panzer Army. The enemy forces were estimated at 400 thousand people, 5900 guns and mortars, 700 tanks and self-propelled guns, 700 aircraft.

The enemy strengthened the defense in the direction of Vienna, which included three defensive lines and a number of intermediate lines. The main strip had a depth of 5-7 kilometers. A second line of defense was prepared 10-20 kilometers from the forward edge. In the operational depth, along the left bank of the Raba River, the width of which reached

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50 meters, an intermediate line was being prepared with strong bridgeheads in the crossing area. The third line ran along the Hungarian-Austrian border. The frontier towns of Bruck, Sopron, and Keszeg were turned into major nodes of resistance. In terms of engineering and firepower, the capital of Austria was well prepared for defense. The defense of Vienna included external and internal contours and fortifications inside the city. The total depth of defense reached 210 kilometers. But the troops occupied basically only the first line.

The area on which the Soviet troops were to operate was crossed by forested spurs of the Vertesh and Bakon mountains and numerous rivers. The largest of them, the Danube, divided the combat area into two sections. The most convenient for the offensive was the direction of Szekes-fehervar, Papa, Sopron, Vienna.

There were no significant changes in the composition of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts. The front line, with the exception of the area of penetration of the 6th SS Panzer Army, remained almost unchanged.

The 40th, 53rd, 7th Guards Armies and the 1st Guards Mechanized Cavalry Group of the 2nd Ukrainian Front, as well as the Romanian 1st and 4th Armies operationally subordinated to it, continued to operate in the southern regions of Slovakia. The 46th Army with the 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps operated south of the Danube between Esztergom and Gant. In the second echelon of the front, west of Budapest, was the 6th Guards Tank Army.

The troops of the 3rd Ukrainian Front - the 9th and 4th Guards, 27th, 26th, 57th and 1st Bulgarian armies - occupied the Gant line, Lake Velence, Shimontornya, Lake Balaton, Babocho, Toryants.

64 rifle divisions, 3 cavalry divisions, 3 tank divisions, 3 mechanized divisions, one cavalry corps - 745 thousand people, 12,200 guns and mortars, 1,218 tanks and self-propelled guns, about 1,000 aircraft were to take part in the operation, carried out by two fronts. According to the directive of the Headquarters, drawn up taking into account the persistent

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According to the proposals of the headquarters of the 3rd Ukrainian Front and the recommendations of Marshal Timoshenko, the main role in the capture of Vienna was assigned to Tolbukhin's troops.

The offensive began at the time set by the Headquarters - in the afternoon of March 16. The strike force of the front, built in two echelons, included 18 rifle divisions, 3900 guns and mortars, 197 tanks and self-propelled guns. Artillery densities of 170-180 barrels per kilometer were created in the direction of the main attack. The immediate task of the 9th and 4th Guards armies was to break through the defenses north of Szekesfehervar, go to the area of Varpalota, Veszprem and, together with the troops of the 27th and 26th armies, encircle and destroy Dietrich's tank army. In the future, it was supposed to move in the direction of Papa, Sopron. The troops of the left wing were to go on the offensive south of Lake Balaton with the task of defeating the 2nd Panzer Army in the Nagykanizsa area.

From the air, ground forces were supported by 837 aircraft of the 17th Air Army.

By the end of March 16, the advance of the guardsmen Glagolev and Zakhvataev did not exceed 3-6 kilometers, due, among other things, to the lack of direct infantry support tanks in combat formations. The fighting was ordered not to stop even at night, although Konstantin Simonov considered such improvisations to be fiction:

"I have managed to make sure more than once that in those cases when an offensive is not specially appointed at night, and it goes on from morning until night, at night it doesn't matter what orders there are, soldiers, as a rule, do not fight. And usually the morning reports on how far the units have advanced during the night do not depend on how much they have actually advanced, but much more on the conscientiousness of the commanders who make these reports, on a greater or lesser measure of their truthfulness. stand in the face of superiors.

Given the situation, the Stavka handed over to Tolbukhin the 6th Guards Tank Army, which had 423 armored vehicles in service. The army should have been used to develop

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the offensive of the right wing and the defeat of the enemy tank group together with the troops of the 27th Army.

The 4th SS Panzer Corps steadfastly held its positions. However, to the north of it, on March 17, the forward detachments of the 46th Army of the 2nd Ukrainian Front (10th Guards, 23rd, 68th Rifle Corps) went on the offensive. They advanced 10 kilometers and reached the second line of defense of the 8th Hungarian Corps. The next day, the main forces of the army crossed the Altal River and began to break through to the west. Entered into battle on the morning of March 19, the 2nd mechanized corps intensified the blow. In the second half of March 20, parts of the corps reached the Danube west of Tovarosh, covering the enemy grouping from the south-west, which numbered more than 17 thousand soldiers and officers. At the same time, on the right bank of the Danube in the same area, the landing of the 83rd Separate Marine Rifle Brigade was carried out. Having allocated part of the forces to liquidate the encircled grouping, General Petrushevsky launched an offensive against Gyor. To develop success, the 23rd tank corps was transferred to him.

Meanwhile, the troops of the right wing of the 3rd Ukrainian Front, overcoming the stubborn resistance of the SS units, by the end of the third day advanced 18 kilometers deep, expanding the breakthrough to 36 kilometers. On the right flank, the paratroopers captured the city of More. On the morning of March 19, the tank army of Lieutenant General A.G. Kravchenko (5th Guards Tank, 9th Guards Mechanized Corps). However, the active defense of the enemy units, transferred by this time from the area southwest of Lake Velence, and the rugged terrain did not allow the army to develop the necessary pace. The tankers, without breaking away from the infantry, covered 6-8 kilometers and did not complete the task of the day.

Josef Dietrich immediately realized that "the Russian strike from the southwest towards Lake Balaton was aimed at separating my army from the army of Balka", and began to gradually withdraw HIS DIVISIONS FROM the "bag". To close the gaps that had formed, the command of Army Group South sent

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he is Tarkan with the 6th Panzer Division of Baron Rudolf von Waldenfels, in the area west of Kishber - the 2nd SS Panzer Division "Reich" under the command of Standartenführer Rudolf Lehmann, and near Szekesfehervar - the 12th Panzer Division "Hitler Youth" Brigadeführer Hugo Kraas. General Wöhler planned to gain a foothold on the line Veszprem - Papa - Tarkan, regroup forces and organize a counterattack with the forces of the 6th SS Panzer Army. To this end, he ordered the armies of Dietrich and Balk to change their areas of responsibility. The first was to take command of the sector of the front from the region north of Veszprem to the Danube over the Hungarian formations. In the south, Balk now commanded, who, one by one, gave the units released here to Dietrich to the north. Therefore, when Tolbukhin moved the 6th Guards Tank Army forward, it was met by the SS Panzer Corps at the Bakonkut-Inota line.

in full force.

Marshal Tolbukhin demanded that Generals Kravchenko and Glagolev complete the encirclement of the 6th SS Panzer Army as soon as possible. On the morning of March 20, part of the forces of the 4th Guards Army, as well as the 27th and 26th armies, were to deliver "cut-off" blows to Berkhida, Polgardi, Lepshen. The 1st Guards Mechanized Corps and the 18th Tank Corps operated in the offensive zones of the 26th and 27th Armies. In addition, the Headquarters allowed the bombers of the 18th Air Army of the ADD to be involved. At the same time, Allied aviation bombarded a number of airfields, railway junctions and industrial facilities in the western part of Hungary and southern Slovakia. In particular, oil refineries in Komarno were destroyed (production decreased by 70%), which were the main supplier of fuel for the army groups "South" and "Center".

As a result of the measures taken, the case moved forward. By the end of March 22, Soviet troops reached the line of Rede, Cheten, Tesh, Kadarta, Papkesi. The 4th Guards Army captured Szekesfehervar, and units of the 9th Guards and 6th Guards Tank Armies, having overcome resistance on

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at the turn of the Bakon mountains, began the pursuit of the enemy. The 18th Tank Corps and the 1st Guards Mechanized Corps advanced 40 kilometers and on March 23, in the area of Berkhida, joined up with the 6th Guards Tank Army.

True, it was not possible to encircle Dietrich's army, but the Germans did not succeed in any counterattack either.

P.V. recalls how the paratroopers fought. Zolotov, his mortar regiment was assigned to the 104th Infantry Division:

"Behind a hill in a field half a kilometer from the road were eight old German tanks. Tanks of the 1930s, medium, dangerous against infantry. Later, our officers said: the infantry, seeing the tanks, lay down on the field along the furrows. As soon as the mat is heard across the field - do not move! The tanks were machine-gun and cannon fire, their guns were short-barreled. The tanks moved very slowly along the dirty soft field, and as soon as they approached forty meters to the infantry, they jumped up and ran forward with a terrible general obscenity! A few seconds later, the soldiers were already drumming on the manhole covers, shooting into all their holes. The Germans lifted the hatches and crawled out with raised hands. As soon as everyone got out, bursts of machine guns rang out - they were all shot. The paratroopers were not taken prisoner.

From this battle until the end of the war, we fought as part of the 9th Guards Army (former landing). They were people of unprecedented courage, but also unprecedented hooliganism. offensive zone

of the infantry regiment we supported passed to the left of the city of More, but this did not suit our paratroopers in any way. There were no villages on the way of the offensive, which means that there were no women, there was nothing to profit from. They quickly find a solution. In turn, a quarter of the soldiers are sent to Pestilence, so they participate in the capture of houses and women who did not have time to run away or hide. All this was given no more than an hour, and then the next group went on. Women were used from fourteen to fifty; complete pogrom was carried out in the houses, everyone was thrown on the floor, beaten, broken, looking for pocket or wrist watches; and if good wine came across, not refused to drink...

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The paratroopers never retreated anywhere, no matter what forces counterattacked them, and the Germans were simply afraid of them. On the other hand, they did not leave a single woman unraped if she could not hide herself securely."

There is a subtlety here. The liberators "played pranks" and, quoting Stalin, "permitted some obscenities" wherever such an opportunity was provided. This is understandable, military crimes take place in peacetime, and even in the chaos of war... However, the scale of such acts in different regions was of a different nature. You can even say that they were regulated from Moscow. For example, when entering the territory of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, commanders and political workers were required to explain to the personnel of the Red Army that this country "is our ally and the attitude of the Red Army towards the population of the liberated regions should be friendly". For Czechoslovakia, the Stavka even had to issue two directives, dated October 31 and December 18, 1944, on "friendly attitude", cooperation with the local administration and bringing violators to severe responsibility. On April 2, 1945, Marshals Tolbukhin and Malinovsky were told something similar when they crossed the Austrian border: "Instruct the troops operating on the territory of Austria not to offend the population of Austria, behave correctly and not confuse the Austrians with the German occupiers." The Austrians, however, did not help much, they were still "mixed" with the Germans. The Soviet commandants regularly had to deal with the complaints of the population: "But there were only one complaint -

rape of local women by soldiers".

Iosif Vissarionovich had to "in a good way" explain to the Czechoslovak, Yugoslav and other comrades, "that the soldiers of the Red Army, who traveled the path from Stalingrad to Budapest in the most difficult conditions, can sometimes take certain liberties and that they must be excused":

"You can't characterize the army on the basis of individual cases, because of one freak you can't insult the entire Red

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Army. A fighter thinks: he is a hero, everything is possible for him, today he is alive, tomorrow he is killed, everyone will forgive him. The soldiers were tired and exhausted in a long and difficult war. It is wrong to take the point of view of a "decent intellectual". There are isolated cases that disgrace our fighters. We shoot for it. But we must remember that people are exhausted, nervous, they think that they are heroes, to whom everything is allowed, everything is allowed.

The "democratic governments" of Poland and Czechoslovakia rested only on Soviet bayonets, were concerned exclusively with the political struggle and strengthening their power. Their security was provided by specialists from the NKVD. Therefore, they only dared to timidly hint that on the basis of the outrages committed either by heroes or by individual freaks, "hostile propaganda can be launched and that the mood of the population may not be everywhere healthy in relation to the Red Army."

Romania is different. After the crushing defeat of the army group "Southern Ukraine" near Iasi and Chisinau, not wanting to turn the country into a theater of military operations, on August 23, 1944, 23-year-old King Mihai [in alliance with the communists organized in Bucharest

coup d'état and arrested Marshal Ion Antonescu and his supporters. Then the king delivered a radio address, announced the change of power, the cessation of hostilities against the USSR and a truce with Great Britain and the USA, as well as the formation of a NEW "Government of National Unity" headed by Constantin Sănătescu. A week later, Romania declared war on its former allies, Germany and Hungary. With the greater joy that the USSR guaranteed the return of Transylvania, torn away in 1940 in favor of Hungary by the decision of the Second Vienna Arbitration. Turning overnight into a member of the anti-Hitler coalition, Romania retained all the attributes of statehood: government administration, army, police, prisons and even a monarchy. Mihai, nicknamed "King of the Komsomol" in Moscow, was awarded the Order of Victory, the highest Soviet military award, which

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was awarded "for the successful conduct of such military operations, on the scale of several or one front, as a result of which the situation is radically changing in favor of the Red Army."

At the end of September 1944, the Romanian High Command issued an order that clearly stated:

"The army, police and gendarmerie must resist with the utmost vigor, even resorting to arms if necessary, in cases where Soviet soldiers alone or in groups, or other individuals who also use Soviet military uniforms, try to take by force or plunder the state or private good, regardless of the instructions ...

The army, the gendarmerie and the police must send robbers or gangs caught in the act of crime to legal authorities, and in cases of disobedience, open FIRE.

All officers and soldiers who will not protect to the last drop of blood the state good, which was handed over to their care and safety, are brought to justice and submitted to a court-martial.

The order was carried out, and there were casualties among the Soviet military personnel. For this reason, almost no "obscenities" were recorded on the territory of Romania, and there were difficulties with the collection of "parcels".

The Hungarians did not have time to change the "roof". Admiral Miklós Horthy made an attempt to withdraw the country from the war and even sent a delegation to Moscow, which signed the preliminary terms of the armistice on October 11, 1944. The main condition was "to break off all relations with Germany and immediately declare war on Germany." However, unlike the Romanian king, the Hungarian regent played his own game, not observing the elementary rules of conspiracy and not taking into account the real alignment of forces. On October 15, Horthy simply announced on the radio that Germany had lost the war, that Hungary "is not obliged to sacrifice herself for the sake of the Allies" and, in order to avoid further senseless bloodshed, intends to conclude

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truce with the enemy. The next day, the Germans overthrew the admiral without much difficulty, arrested him and took him to Bavaria. The clinical Nazi Ferenc Salashi came to power. The new leader swore love to Hitler to the grave, promising to put the Hungarian army to the last man in the service of Germany (having led the country on the eve of the obvious collapse, this fool first of all attended to the extermination of Jews and Gypsies, who were not touched under Horthy, and in the end earned himself a noose around his neck). On the other hand, Horthy's call to the people and the army to "follow me" had no noticeable effect on the Hungarian troops. To the last they fought shoulder to shoulder with the Germans, remaining the most faithful allies of the Reich. Since 1919, the Hungarians developed a strong dislike for Bolshevism.

On October 24, 1944, the GKO Headquarters printed:

"Due to the fact that the Hungarian troops do not stop fighting against our troops and continue to hold a united front with the Germans, the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command orders to act on the battlefield against the Hungarian troops in the same way as against the German ones, not making a difference between them, what to bring to the attention of all the troops of the front.

That is how they acted. Making no difference:

"When you approach the front line, where our troops have just moved forward, you see the picture of the barbaric pogrom in the apartments in its original form, that is, untidy, destroyed apartments, and this situation was everywhere. What did the soldiers want when they carried out such pogroms? Just a wristwatch and a pocket watch, they didn't need anything else. Because of the clock, they threw everything out of chests of drawers and cupboards, and if they did not find anything, they got even more angry, suspecting the owners that they had hidden the clock so carefully. And out of anger, they beat jars with tomatoes, jam, juice, etc. Wherever our troops appeared, young girls and young women disappeared; in the houses you see only old women, old men and children up to twelve years old, everyone carefully hid, and not in vain. This they established from the experience of first contact with

our parts.

Driving along the roads, we saw dozens of defeated

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wine cellars, we did not see a single one that was not ruined. Wine, as a rule, was released from barrels onto the floor and filled the entire cellar with a layer of up to one meter. Several times we saw the floating corpses of our soldiers, turned blue, drunk and suffocated in the vapors of wine.

I managed to talk to a young Hungarian, in whose apartment we lived for two or three days... He asked me many questions: "Why don't Russians believe in God? Without faith in God, people will lose their conscience, learn to lie, steal, and start killing each other." All my proofs that unbelievers can have a conscience did not satisfy him. "Your soldiers are raping our women and girls, destroying our property. Would a believer allow this? I proved to him that the Germans and Hungarians also raped Russian women and girls..."

Each battle gave a new reason for revenge. The "price of the liberation mission" in Hungary was paid with the blood of half a million soldiers and officers of the Red Army, of which 140,000 were irretrievable losses. But we won't stand up for the price, will we? So Marshal Malinovsky really wanted to enter Budapest before Marshal Tolbukhin, and on December 4, 1944, without any preparation in the Erchi region, he sent the 46th Army to force the Danube. The Hungarian Colonel Emil Tomka, who observed this picture, simply fell into a stupor:

"When I arrived in the northern region in the first half of the day, a wild picture appeared before my eyes. Our artillery was constantly shooting at the Russians who were trying to cross the river. They were also ironed by the German bombers. Three mortars fired at them from our area. But, in spite of everything, the Russians continued to cross the river. Groups of Soviet soldiers were transported not only in boats, but even on ferries. I saw how a German aerial bomb hit a small barge, packed full of people, and the boat immediately sank to the bottom. The most monstrous thing happened where the coast was in German hands. The Germans fired from machine guns at the landed soldiers. Their chances of survival were extremely small. Anyone who was not hit by a bullet had to try to shoot back, being chest-deep in an icy

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water and mud. Having seen enough of this, one of the hussars turned to me: "Mr. Colonel, what do the Russians do with their enemies if they treat their soldiers so cruelly?"

Nineteen-year-old Anna Polts, "liberated from the yoke of the Nazi invaders," spent three months in the village of Chakvar, in the front line of the 4th Guards Army:

"Even in Budapest, I saw posters on which a Soviet soldier rips off a cross from a woman's neck. I heard they rape women. I also read leaflets that said what the Russians were doing. I did not believe all this, I thought it was German propaganda. I was convinced that it was impossible to imagine them throwing women to the ground, breaking their spines, and so on. Then I found out how they break the spine: it's as easy as shelling pears and it doesn't happen on purpose.

Lord God, how naive I was then! I didn't know they had to be afraid...

On the second or third day after that, strangers came from a neighboring village and said: all the men were executed; forced to dig a long hole, put on the edge and shot in the back of the head. Three local residents dug in a hole. (This is usually done: you dig your own grave - in almost all wars ...)

They dragged me to the kitchen and there they grabbed me so hard on the floor - apparently, I again wanted to defend or attack - that my head hit the corner of the dustbin. It was of hard wood, as one would expect in a dean's dwelling. I lost consciousness.

I woke up in the dean's large inner room. The glass was shattered, the windows boarded up, the bed was nothing but bare boards. There I lay. I was wearing one of the Russians. I heard a female cry from the ceiling: "Mom, Mom!" Then it dawned on me that it was my voice and I was screaming myself.

As soon as I realized this, I stopped screaming and lay quietly, motionless. I regained consciousness, but did not feel my body, as if it was stiff or cold. Yes, I must have been really cold - naked from the waist down, in not

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heated room with no windows. I don't know how many Russians raped me after that, I don't know how many there were before. When dawn broke, they left me. I got up. It was difficult to move. My head and whole body ached. There was a lot of blood flowing. I didn't feel like I was being raped; I felt only beaten, crippled. It had nothing to do with class or sex. It didn't look like anything at all. Just now, when I write these lines, I understand that the exact word is violence. That's what it was.

I don't remember if it was then or another time, but they took everyone away with them. Even Mina. I could still bear it, because I was already a married woman, but Mina - she was a virgin. Walking through the house, I came across her, hearing crying; she was lying on the cement floor in some closet. I went to her. "It's better not to go to the left," she said, "there are still Russians there, they will attack us again ..."

Front line fighters, who are "four steps to death", seized the moment:

"Another time at night a whole detachment broke into us, then they threw us to the floor, it was dark and cold, they were shooting around. A picture remained in my memory: eight or ten Russian soldiers are squatting around me, and each in turn lies down on me. They set a quota of how many minutes for each. They looked at wristwatches, lit matches every now and then, one even had a lighter - they kept track of time. Potora - they spit each other. One asked: "Welcome to the robot?"

I lay without moving. I thought I wouldn't survive. Of course, they don't die from it. Unless the spine breaks, but even then you don't die right away ...

The Russian people were incredibly brave, they did not put pain and fear into anything. With the Russians, nothing could ever be foreseen, predicted; it's amazing how, with their disorganization, they could do anything at all. If they left, they never said goodbye, but simply disappeared. Returning, they greeted us with incredible joy, loud cries, picked us up, threw us into the air, as if they had met the closest and dearest people. They were people with a good heart, but incredibly wild. First of all

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we have learned from them cursing. "Fuck your mother" - that was the first real Russian phrase...

Watches in general - yes, they were looking for them everywhere and everywhere. I think that after the departure of the Soviet troops, there were almost no hours left in all of Hungary...

We deduced, or thought we deduced, a regularity: after each major battle or after the village was recaptured from the enemy, three days of permitted looting followed. Freedom to rob and rape. Then the ban came into force: they said that for a proven rape, a soldier could be shot."

The rear men with a clear conscience used their position in the occupied country:

"I went to the Russians and asked them for a jug of milk.

I knew the price: I had to pay with my body for a glass of milk.

Then I went to the priest's house, our last home: I wanted to bring a mattress from there, because the door was heavy and gradually damp. Mami's health was deteriorating. The mattress also had to be paid in kind. The officer agreed: if I lie down with him, I can take the mattress (which belonged to us). Filike was with me too, it all happened in the same cellar with potatoes.

Some potatoes were still on the floor, and I lay on it, not moving. Please!

Meanwhile, the Russian officer lit a match, first touched my eyes with his finger to see if they were open. Convinced of this, he set to work. It hurt a little. But since I still didn't move, didn't cry out, he lit another match to see if I was alive. He shook his head.

I must not have given him much satisfaction. But when I started to get ready to take away the mattress, he sent his orderly to the basement, who also took advantage of me.

Then I did not think why he sent an orderly. Now it seems to me that they are more democratic than our officers. Or would a Hungarian officer also share me with his orderly? ..

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In war, a person becomes terrible and incomprehensible.

Hungary seems to have been the only country that fought both the Soviet Union and Germany at the same time.

On December 21, 1944, with the permission of the Kremlin, delegates of the Provisional National Assembly gathered in Debrecen, who elected, under the exclamations of "Long live Marshal Stalin", the Provisional Government headed by General Bela Miklos, the former commander of the 1st Hungarian army, who defected to the Russians after the arrest of Horthy. Naturally, the main violin was played by the Comintern Communists, "representatives of the Hungarian democratic emigration." On December 28, the Provisional Government, "carrying out the will of the Hungarian people," denounced all treaties concluded with Germany and declared war on it. On January 20, 1945, an armistice agreement was signed in the Kremlin between the USSR, England and the USA on the one hand and Hungary on the other. Under this agreement, Hungary undertook to field at least eight infantry divisions to participate in the war against Nazi Germany. But there was nothing to exhibit: there were no communists among the officers, and even non-commissioned officers, as if for selection, turned out to be in their own way.

essentially "fascists". The new army turned out to be some kind of "reactionary" and not controlled by the Central Committee of the CPSU; in the second half of March it consisted of one infantry division.

As usual, when they try to establish a "dictatorship of the proletariat" in the country and carry out a land reform with the aim of "aggravating the class struggle in the countryside", the first thing that went missing in People's Hungary was food. Until recently, "fascist" agrarian Hungary surprised the Red Army soldiers with the abundance and cheapness of products: "In every house there is white bread, smoked meat, sausage, jam. Fruits and vegetables are carefully processed, and everything that is prepared for the winter is stored in the cellars. We climb, of course, climb. The cellar is a safe haven during battles and bombings. And then, these rows of cans and wonderful Hungarian wine. Thanks to the abundance of food and wine, our troops switched to co-support. The brew, which was prepared in the field kitchens, was simply not taken. For what? Let's say a column is moving through the village, the soldiers are like mice,

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sniff-sniff around the yards. And when they catch up with the formation, each has a chicken leg in his bosom, in a gas mask bag - jars of jam, on a bayonet - a loaf of white bread, and in his hand - a canister or a bucket of wine. The commanders looked at it through their fingers: it fell to them too. After all, Hungary was an ally of Germany, and therefore the soldiers got away with a lot."

And in March 1945, the General Secretary of the Hungarian Communist Party, Matthias Rakosi, asked Moscow for bread for the starving cities:

"The population now receives daily 100 gr. of bread. After the promulgation of the law on the land reform, the Red Army will put at our disposal, until the new harvest, a large amount of foodstuffs, which, apparently, will make it possible to increase the ration of bread given out to 200 gr. This, of course, will increase respect both for the Soviet Union and for the Party..."

We are experiencing great difficulties from the fact that raids have again become more frequent in the streets of Budapest. Sometimes it happens that thousands of workers (!), going to the factories or returning from there, stop in the streets and are sent as prisoners of war to various camps. These events are justified by the fact that there are many fascist soldiers dressed in civilian clothes in Budapest. As a result, hundreds of comrades disappear. The mood of the workers is depressingly affected by the fact that in many factories working to provide for the Red Army, the workers are not paid wages and are not given food. Hungry workers work reluctantly (!), there are often cases when workers are beaten, etc."

Very soon, Hungary is destined to become one of the barracks of the "socialist camp".

Moving on to the second stage of the operation, Marshal Tolbukhin decided to deliver the main blow with the forces of the 9th Guards and 6th Guards Tank Armies (the 208th self-propelled artillery brigade was transferred last) to Veszprem, Szombathely, deeply enveloping Vienna from the south. 4th Guards Army, which, as a result of a detour, lost contact

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close contact with the enemy, regroup to the area west of Mora, reinforce it with a mechanized corps, and no later than March 26 move to Papa, Sopron. The 27th Army, reinforced by the 18th Tank Corps and the 209th SU-100 Artillery Brigade, was to advance along the northern shore of Lake Balaton to the southwest in the general direction of Zalaegerszeg, so that in a further attack from the north, together with With the 57th and 1st Bulgarian armies, encircle the forces of the enemy's 2nd tank army and capture the oil-bearing region of Nagykanizhy. After the turn of General Trofimenko's troops to the south, it was planned to bring the 26th Army into action, which was to move west, towards Kermend and Graz.

On March 23, the Stavka introduced its own amendments to the commander's decision. The 3rd Ukrainian Front was ordered not to philosophize with maneuvers, not to start encirclements, to develop the main blow not

to Szombathely, and in the direction of Papa, Sopron. For this, the 9th Guards and 6th Guards Tank Armies were ordered to advance on Zeldömelg, Köseg. The 4th Guards was regrouping in the lane to the right of the 9th Guards. The 26th Army was to strike at Szombathely, and the 27th Army at Zalaegerszeg. The 57th and 1st Bulgarian armies had the task of capturing the Nagykanizsya region no later than April 5-7.

The armies of Glagolev and Kravchenko, who by inertia captured Veszprem, had to turn to the right. Zakhvataev's army replaced the left-flank units of the 46th army due to the change in the dividing line between the fronts, Hagen's army was introduced into the battle between the 9th guards and 27th armies.

By March 25, the troops of the 46th Army and the right wing of the 3rd Ukrainian Front broke through the enemy defenses between the Danube and Lake Balaton, overcame the mountains of Vertesh and Bakonyi, advancing to a depth of 80 kilometers, created conditions for the development of an offensive on Vienna. Taking advantage of the successful actions south of the Danube, on March 25, the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian Front launched attacks on Bratislava and Brno.

On March 26, Soviet troops began to pursue

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the enemy, retreating with rearguard battles to the intermediate line of defense on the Raba River. They widely used detours of resistance centers, and to capture crossings through water barriers, they threw advance detachments behind enemy lines. Rapid pursuit was facilitated by aviation, which inflicted continuous strikes on the retreating troops. The rate of advance increased to 25-35 kilometers per day. The divisions of General Glagolev on March 26 took the city of Papa, the divisions of General Petrushevsky on March 28 captured the cities of Komarov and Győr and completely cleared the right bank of the Danube to the mouth of the Raba River. The enemy tried to hold out on the western bank of the Raba, but the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian Front, having crossed the river on March 27-28, broke his resistance and continued advancing.

The elite divisions of the SS, not listening to orders from Berlin, to the unspeakable chagrin of their beloved Führer, retreated scattered, in places shamefully scrambled, losing the last remnants of their fighting spirit. No wonder: the SS men were now "sculpted" from the boys of the "Hitler Youth", coastal defense sailors, airfield service soldiers who had no field training, for the sake of the illusion of a high degree of staffing. As punishment, Hitler ordered the personnel of the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 9th Panzer Divisions, who had committed the most mischief, to tear off the sleeve patches with the names of their units.

"Our formations of the SS troops showed themselves very poorly here," wrote Goebbels. "Even the Leibstandarte, because the old cadres of its officers and rank and file have been killed. The current "Leibstandarte" retained only its honorary name. And, despite this, the Führer decided to teach the SS troops a lesson. Himmler, on his behalf, flew to Hungary to take away the sleeve patches from these units. For Sepp Dietrich, this will, of course, be the most terrible shame imaginable. The generals from the ground forces are terribly happy about this: such a blow for their competitors! The SS troops in Hungary not only failed to carry out their own offensive, but also retreated, and in part even fled. Poor quality human material pro

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showed itself here in the most unpleasant way. One can only pity Sepp Dietrich, but one can also sympathize with Himmler, who, being the chief of the SS troops, who does not have any military awards, must perform this difficult action against Sepp Dietrich, who wears diamonds.

However, the stripes were already removed for the purpose of disguise. Dietrich, offended in the best of feelings, got drunk, and after sleeping, he decided not to bring the order to his subordinates.

On March 29, Koszeg and Szombathely fell. On March 30, Soviet mobile formations broke through the enemy fortifications on the Hungarian-Austrian border and entered Austria. | In April, the guards captured the cities of Sopron and Wiener Neustadt by a roundabout maneuver and turned the offensive front to the north. With the withdrawal of Soviet troops to the area of the Vienna lowland, to the direct approaches to the capital of Austria, the second stage of the operation ended.

To the south, Trofimenko's 27th Army with the 18th Tank and 5th Guards Cavalry Corps, advancing along Lake Balaton, threatened the rear of the German 2nd Tank Army. General de Angelis played a retreat. Taking advantage of this, on March 29 the 57th and | th Bulgarian armies went on the offensive. On April 2, formations of these armies and the 5th Guards Cavalry Corps captured the city of Nagykanizsa with the last oil fields and oil refineries that worked for the Third Reich. This marked the beginning of the agony of German resistance.

In order to hold back the onslaught of the troops of the left wing of the 3rd Ukrainian Front, the enemy began to transfer units and formations of Army Group E from the Yugoslav sector of the front here. The leadership of the German troops in the southeast was reorganized. On March 25, the command of Army Group F was transferred to the commander of Group E, General Alexander Lehr, and the headquarters of Group F was left at the disposal of Army Group Vistula.

| April Stavka clarified the task of the troops advancing on Vienna. 46th Army of the 2nd Ukrainian Front with subordinate 2nd Guards Mechanized and 23rd Tanks

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with its corps was to advance on Brook, Vienna and, together with the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian Front, capture the capital of Austria. 3rd Ukrainian Front, with the forces of the 4th, 9th Guards and 6th Guards Tank Armies, to capture Vienna and reach the Tulln-St. Pölten-Lilienfeld line no later than April 12-15; On the 26th, 27th, 57th and 1st Bulgarian armies, no later than April 10-12, they were to clear the cities of Glognitz, Bruk, Graz, Maribor from German troops and firmly gain a foothold at the turn of the Mürz and Myuri Dratva rivers.

As the Soviet troops approached Vienna, the enemy increased resistance. Retreating, he destroyed roads, set up numerous barriers, and launched counterattacks at intermediate defensive lines. But the Soviet troops persistently advanced to the northwest. On April 2, the 46th Army reached the Hungarian-Austrian border, and then overcame it between the Danube and Lake Neusiedler See. Tolbukhin's troops, mastering | -April 4 by the cities of Sopron. Wiener Neustadt, reached the approaches to Vienna. North of Varazdin, they operated on the territory of Yugoslavia together with the Yugoslav troops.

To the north of the Danube, the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian Front and the Romanian armies that were part of it successfully carried out the Bratislava-Brnov operation. On March 30 they captured Komarno, on April 4 they liberated the city of Bratislava.

Marshal Tolbukhin decided to seize Vienna with simultaneous strikes from three directions: from the southeast — by the forces of the 4th Guards Army and the 1st Guards Mechanized Corps, from the south and southwest — by the forces of the 6th Guards Tank Army with its attached 18th Tank Corps and part of the forces of the 9th Guards Army. The remaining divisions of Glagolev's army were to bypass the city, making a march through the spurs of the Eastern Alps, and cut off the enemy's retreat to the west. On April 6, the Headquarters ordered the 46th Army with tank and mechanized corps to be transferred to the left bank of the Danube for an offensive bypassing Vienna from the north. From the air, this grouping of troops was supported by aviation of the 17th and part of the forces of the 5th air armies.

In early April, Vienna was defended by eight armored and one

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infantry division. General von Bunau was appointed military commandant.

Fulfilling the instructions of the Headquarters, the 46th Army crossed to the left bank of the Danube and began to develop an offensive against Vienna. The Danube military flotilla provided great assistance in organizing the crossing. Then, with fire from armored boats, the flotilla supported the troops advancing along the coast.

On April 5, fighting began on the outskirts of Vienna, which immediately took on a fierce character. The enemy tried with strong fire, infantry and tank counterattacks to prevent the Soviet troops from breaking through to the city. The troops of General Zakhvataev advancing from the south were not successful. But the army of Glagolev, advancing south-west of the city, advanced 16-18 kilometers. The front commander ordered the immediate regrouping of the entire 6th Guards Tank Army to bypass Vienna from the west and northwest.

Wishing to prevent the export of industrial equipment from the capital, mining and destruction of bridges and other important facilities, the Military Council of the front, on Stalin's instructions, called on the inhabitants of the city not to leave the capital and resist the Nazis: German domination has come, but the retreating German troops want to turn Vienna into a battlefield, as they did in Budapest. This threatens Vienna and its inhabitants with the same destruction and horrors that were inflicted by the Germans on Budapest and its population... Citizens of Vienna! Help the Red Army in liberating the capital of Austria, Vienna, from the Nazi yoke."

On the morning of April 6, from the east and south, the troops of the 4th Guards and part of the forces of the 9th Guards Armies began an assault on Vienna. At the same time, formations of the 6th Guards Tank Army and the 38th Guards Rifle Corps bypassed the city from the west and reached the Danube on April 7th. The next day they reached the center of the city, where they joined up with the troops of Zakhvataev's army.

In connection with the defeat of Army Group South, General Wöhler lost his post. He was replaced by Lothar Rendulich,

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who believed the Führer that he would hold Vienna and prevent the enemy from penetrating the Alps and the valleys of the Northern Danube.

However, by this time, the remnants of the SS Panzer Army, avoiding encirclement, retreated from Vienna to the west. The cadets of the Vienna military school remained directly in the city, up to 15 separate infantry battalions and Volkssturm detachments. Street battles began, which were conducted continuously: during the day the main forces fought, and at night - units and subunits specially assigned for this purpose.

In the midst of the battle on April 9, the Soviet government issued a statement stating that the USSR was not pursuing the goal of conquering any part of the territory of Austria or changing its social system, but was in favor of the country's independence and the restoration of democratic order.

By April 10, the enemy garrison was pinned down on three sides. The townsfolk hung white sheets and pillowcases in the windows as a sign of surrender. In this situation, the German command took all measures to keep the only bridge across the Danube that remained in its hands and bring it to its units on the northern bank of the river. The 46th Army was supposed to come here, but it, faced with stubborn resistance, was late.

On the night of April 11, the 4th Guards Army began forcing the Danube Canal.

By the middle of the day on April 13, Soviet troops completely captured Vienna. The paratroopers, far from the subtleties of big politics, hoisted a red flag over the building of the Austrian Parliament. The remnants of the garrison fled to the left bank of the Danube along the Imperial Bridge, which the Germans did not have time to blow up. On the shoulders of the enemy, units of the 4th Guards Army and the 1st Guards Mechanized Corps crossed over to the left bank of the Danube.

The story of the capture of the Imperial Bridge is heroic and wonderful.

Let's take a description of the combat path of the Danube military flotilla or the memoirs of a captain | rank A.V. Sverdlov and learn that the bridge was saved by the "striped devils":

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"Two attempts to capture the bridge were unsuccessful. Then the commander of the 2nd brigade of river ships, captain of the second rank A. Arzhavkin, proposed to the command of the Danube flotilla to seize the bridge, landing troops from it simultaneously on the right and left banks. The paratroopers were tasked with capturing the bridge and holding it until the units that stormed the city approached.

Due to the difficult navigational and hydrographic situation (the fairway was blocked by a blown up railway bridge and sunken ships), Arzhavkin suggested that the landing should be carried out in the afternoon. Two armored boats were allocated for landing, and three armored boats under the command of Senior Lieutenant S. Klopovsky were allocated for cover. A company of the 80th Guards Rifle Division under the command of Senior Lieutenant E. Pilosyan went into the landing. The landing was not meant to be at noon on 1] April. Eight mortar boats under the command of senior lieutenant G. Bobkov, as well as artillery of the army and coastal escort detachment of the Danube flotilla, were allocated for artillery support of the landing.

On the morning of April 11, the forward detachment (five armored boats from the 2nd brigade of river ships, commander - captain of the 2nd rank A.F. Arzhavkin) went on a breakthrough and with a fight went to the landing site. The rest of the boats moved behind the breakthrough detachment and destroyed the identified enemy firing points. The appearance of Soviet boats in the city center during the day turned out to be a complete surprise for the Germans. The lead armored boat placed a smoke screen, after which their groups landed one by one directly at the bridge on both banks of the Danube, and the rest fired at point-blank range at enemy firing points. With a decisive attack, machine gunners destroy the Nazis on the bridge and approaches to it, occupy the trenches in which the enemy had just been sitting. Sappers with scissors climb under the flooring and cut the wires stretching to the explosive charges.

The enemy immediately pulled up significant infantry forces with tanks, self-propelled guns and mortars to the battlefield. Armored boats under heavy fire began to retreat, while all of them received significant damage, on

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fires broke out on board, the crews were killed and wounded. Nevertheless, all boats returned to base.

In the area of the bridge, a continuous battle flared up, which was distinguished by unprecedented fierceness. Attacks by superior forces of German troops followed one after another along both banks of the river, cross-fire did not stop for a minute. With the strain of all forces, the company held out for three days. Only continuous massive artillery support made it possible to repulse enemy attacks. On the night of April 13, an airborne battalion from the 7th Guards Airborne Division broke through the quarters occupied by the enemy to the bridge, but after this breakthrough, the German attacks reached unprecedented strength. The landing force was under threat of death.

On the morning of April 13, a consolidated assault detachment (commander - Senior Lieutenant I. Kochkin) from the Marine Corps of the Danube Flotilla broke through the enemy defenses in the area of the Vienna Bridge, a rifle regiment of the 80th Guards Rifle Division was introduced into the gap. With heavy losses, this detachment managed to break through to the bridge and join the landing force. While the main attention of the enemy was focused on fighting the detachment that had broken through, the main forces of the division, reinforced by self-propelled guns from the 2nd Guards Mechanized Brigade, were brought into the gap. After a fierce battle, they also went to the bridge, cutting the eastern grouping of the enemy. 16 Soviet self-propelled guns crossed the bridge at high speed and took up all-round defense on the west bank, and sappers of the mechanized brigade removed explosives from the bridge (over 100 charges).

The personnel of the landing force and breakthrough boats were awarded orders and medals in full composition".

Commander of the 20th Guards Rifle Corps Lieutenant General N.I. Biryukov claims that the bridge was saved by paratroopers, but not by marines, but by "infantry" from the 7th Guards divisions:

"On the night of April 1, our landing force, the first rifle battalion of the 217th regiment, reinforced by sappers, chemists and scouts, was transferred on armored boats across the Danube.

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Having landed on the left bank, the paratroopers simultaneously, from two sides, rushed to the bridge, however, met with the strongest fire, they lay down four hundred meters from the target and were forced to repulse enemy counterattacks.

The units of the 232nd regiment also failed to capture the bridge. We managed to do this only in the morning of April 13, when the 21st regiment, led by its brave commander, Lieutenant Colonel M.I. Ryabchenko broke through to the left bank with a swift throw, connecting there with the battalion of the 217th regiment. Good fire support was provided by the armored boats of the Danube Flotilla, as well as those brave guardsmen who made their way from farm to farm, using suspended boards, floorings that were under the roadway of the bridge.

Chief of Staff of the 7th Guards Airborne Division Colonel N. Gladkov sailors and did not notice at all.

"At 11:40 p.m. on April 12, the commander of the 20th Guards Budapest Rifle Corps, General N. Biryukov, arrived at the command post of the 7th Division, who set its commander the task of capturing the Imperial Bridge on the night of April 13, after which to create a foothold on the left bank of the Danube, linking up with the advancing troops of the 46th Army of the 2nd Ukrainian Front in the area of the city of Floridsdorf.

After assessing the situation, the division commander, Colonel D. Drychkin, decided to seize the Imperial Bridge with a surprise night attack without artillery preparation by the forces of the 21st Guards Budapest Airborne Regiment, commanded by the decisive and courageous commander, Lieutenant Colonel M. Ryabchenko. order, the regiment passed the battle formations of the 80th division and advanced to the immediate approaches to the bridge.

While preparations were underway for the assault, the regiment's reconnaissance secretly and imperceptibly approached the banks of the Danube in the area of the bridge and began to study the enemy and the terrain. Along with the military foot reconnaissance of the regiment, an engineering reconnaissance was sent at the same time, which consisted of sappers miners from the Separate Guards sapper battalion of the division and a sapper platoon of the 21st regiment. They were charged with setting up a way to mine the bridge and cut the wires.

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Scouts and sappers had to operate in a difficult situation, as the area adjacent to the bridge was systematically illuminated by rockets. However, after examining the area around the bridge, scouts and sappers crawled under the bridge, where they found electrical wires leading to aerial bombs and shells that were attached to metal trusses. Making their way along the bridge at a dizzying height, the brave sappers silently cut the countless wires that concealed a mortal danger.

At the same time, the regiment's reconnaissance on foot, continuing to survey the area, discovered a large-diameter pipe next to the bridge, which went to the opposite end of the bridge.

After carefully listening to the report of the scouts, the regiment commander, lieutenant colonel M. Ryabchenko, decided to immediately transport the 1st battalion, commanded by the guard captain D.

Borisov. The battalion was tasked with crossing over to the opposite bank of the Danube, attacking the enemy from the rear with a sudden blow, capturing the northern part of the bridge and gaining a foothold, preventing the enemy from breaking through to the bridge from the Hubertovskaya dam.

As soon as the companies of the battalion took their starting position, in

' two red and one green rockets soared into the sky. Guardsmen

the paratroopers, having opened strong automatic-machine-gun fire, burst into the defensive line with a swift throw

ZITSYU of the northeastern part of the bridge.

As a result of a sudden and swift attack, the Guards captured the tip of the Imperial Bridge on the move.

At the same time, on a signal, the main forces of the 21st Guards Airborne Regiment rushed to attack. The enemy detachment, bearing heavy losses, began to withdraw across the bridge. One of our sappers saw a fascist soldier set fire to a fuse. Only five or six meters remained before the boxes with explosives. The brave guardsman, risking his life, rushed to the burning cord and managed to break it. The explosion of the bridge was prevented. The soldiers of the 21st regiment, having broken the resistance of the enemy, by 7 o'clock on April 13

' united with the companies of the 1st battalion on the opposite be

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The units of the 21st regiment found themselves in a very difficult situation. However, the brave guards paratroopers, together with the regiment commander, lieutenant colonel M. Ryabchenko, who was on the opposite bank, and the regiment's deputy commander for political affairs, Major A. Dobrov, continued to hold the bridge, responding to the enemy with well-aimed machine-gun and mortar fire. In the middle of the day, the armored boats of the Danube military flotilla operating on the Danube approached the Imperial Bridge and opened heavy gun and machine-gun fire on the defending enemy troops on the Gubertovskaya dam. This greatly facilitated the position of the regiment's units. But the battle on the small foothold on the other side of the bridge continued. The enemy sought to break through to the bridge. All his attempts were successfully repulsed by the organized and strong fire of the regiment's battalions. In the meantime, the command of the 7th division did everything to transport the main forces of the division as quickly as possible. At 4 pm on April 13, under the cover of a skillfully placed smoke screen, 16 self-propelled artillery installations of the 8th Guards Separate Self-Propelled Artillery Battalion under the command of Major V. Vasiliev rushed over the bridge to the opposite bank of the Danube at high speed. The self-propelled gunners were followed by battalions of the 29th and 18th Guards Airborne Regiments, which immediately took up their starting position for the attack 600 meters from the Gubertovskaya dam. Now the threat of the bridge being blown up has been averted...

For their courage, bravery and high military prowess, the commander of the 1st Guards Battalion, Captain D. Borisov, and the commander of the 21st Guards Airborne Regiment of the Guards, Lieutenant Colonel M. Ryabchenko, were awarded the Order of Suvorov III degree, the commander of the 7th Guards Airborne Division of the Guard Colonel D. Drychkin - Order of Kutuzov I

degrees."

However, the head of the political department of the front, lieutenant general I.S. Anoshin is sure that the savvy soldiers of the 4th Guards Red Banner Rifle Division of the 31st Guards Corps were the first to break into the Imperial Bridge.

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They got to the object through the city sewerage system:

"On April 12, the 2nd Guards Rifle Battalion made the first underground march. The companies went in a column one at a time. Ahead is a reconnaissance detachment, then the head outpost. The rear outpost closed the column.

When night fell on the street, the battalion came to the surface. They acted quickly. Having killed the Nazis who were taken aback by surprise, the first thing they did was occupy the church at the entrance to the bridge and began to block the approaches to it. In the meantime, the 4th rifle company captured the corner house on Reichsbrückenstrasse, and the soldiers of the company of the guards of Senior Lieutenant G. Myasoedov cut the wires leading to the bridge.

The sappers followed the battalion. Without wasting a minute, the group led by sergeant D. Filippov began to make their way to the bridge. Until dawn on April 13, she surveyed the bridge. Under the first two bulls from the left bank, Filippov discovered a large amount of explosives with wires already connected. The sergeant cut the wires. The bridge was saved. However, the battle for him was not over.

Covering Filippov's sappers, the 5th rifle company of the 8th Guards Regiment started a firefight with the Nazis on the bridge. From its opposite end and the bank of the Danube, machine guns fired across the bridge, several enemy artillery batteries and mortars fired. In such an environment, it is impossible to move across the bridge. We urgently need to suppress enemy batteries.

And again, the artillerymen of the 3rd Battalion of the 23rd Guards Artillery Regiment were the first to come to the aid of the motorized riflemen. With direct fire, they hit the machine guns and suitable tanks of the Nazis on the left bank of the river.

During the adjustment of the fire, the commander of the 3rd Artillery Division of the Guard, Major A. Koval, was wounded. They bandaged his wound and wanted to send him to a safe place, but the brave officer refused.

"I won't leave until the bridge is ours!" - declared the hero-artilleryman.

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Having received a report on the clearance of the Imperial Bridge, the division commander ordered Lieutenant Colonel Panchenko of the guards to immediately seize a bridgehead on the opposite bank.

Then we learned that we were the first to step on the bridge and rushed to the opposite bank of the soldiers of the platoon of the guards, junior lieutenant V. Osetrov. Behind Osetrov's platoon, a platoon of Lieutenant A. Mamedov and other units crossed to the opposite bank. Osetrov, Mamedov and Voronin were wounded, but did not leave the battle. By lunchtime on the 13th, the 2nd Rifle Battalion had moved to the opposite bank, while the 3rd supported the attackers with fire from the right bank. In general, the 8th Guards Rifle Regiment ensured not only the capture of the Imperial Bridge, but also its integrity and held it until the arrival of units of the 20th Guards Rifle Corps.

The command appreciated the exploits of the guards in the battles for the bridge. In addition to the Guard Major A.M. Koval, the title of Hero of the Soviet Union was awarded to the commander of the 8th Guards Rifle Regiment of the Guards, Lieutenant Colonel I.N. Panchenko; guard junior lieutenant V. Osetrov was awarded the Order of the Red Banner. Sergeant Dmitry Filippov was awarded the Order of Lenin, his comrades were awarded the Orders of the Patriotic War and the Red Star. Frontline

The newspaper "Soviet Warrior" published a photo with the following text: "Four brave sappers under the command of guard sergeant Dmitry Filippov secretly made their way to the enemy's location at night, captured the bridge (!) across the Danube, cleared it of mines and held it in their hands until our infantry arrived. In the photo: heroic sappers (from left to right) of the Guards Corporal I. Polivoda, Guards Sergeant D. Filippov, Guards Junior Sergeant A. Korolev and Guards Red Army soldier I. Sviridov.

But that's not all. It turns out that on the same night of April 13, six volunteers from the 2nd Guards Mechanized Brigade of the corps of General Russiyanov, having crept up by swimming, penetrated the bridge, cut out the sentries and demined:

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"There were no special tools: the fasteners were cut with sharp knives, and then, under the roar of exploding shells and mines, boxes with pyroxylin and tol were thrown into the blackened water of the Danube far below. In a few hours, the guards neutralized about 20 boxes of explosives.

To four scouts: senior sergeant Andrei Mitrofanovich Kulnev, guards foreman Fyodor Ivanovich Minin, guards private Grigory Martynovich Moskalchuk and Nikolai Denisovich Borisov and two sappers - senior sergeant Maksim Anufrievich Lastovsky and guards corporal Andrei Matveyevich Zolki well, for this feat it was awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union. The award documents for Lastovsky and Zolkin say that the first neutralized 76 charges, the second - 56.

The following disposition will emerge.

In the trenches at the ends of the Imperial Bridge, a company of machine gunners of the 80th Guards Rifle Division, landed by boats of the Danube Flotilla, has entrenched and has been fighting to the death for three days. The company is commanded by Senior Lieutenant E.A. Pilosyan, his sappers cut the wires with scissors,

perhaps not all.

On the night of April 13, the 1st Battalion of the 21st Regiment crossed "through a pipe of large diameter" to the opposite bank of the Danube, and the regiment's sappers, "making their way along the spans of the bridge at a dizzying height", silently cut countless electric wires "going to air bombs and shells. Somewhere near them, having removed the enemy sentries, rummaging under the roadway and dropping "boxes with pyroxylin and tol" into the water, a group of senior lieutenant Kulnev, and a group of sergeant Filippov at that time deactivates explosives under the first two bulls, discovers "tai - nicknames" in the spans and also cuts fuses. A rifle battalion of the 8th Guards Regiment emerges from the sewers and blocks the approaches to the bridge. Directly on the outskirts of the "object 56", having passed through the combat formations of the 80th Guards Division, the 21st Budapest Regiment is concentrated.

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Before dawn, Lieutenant Colonel Ryabchenko's regiment swept away with a surprise attack a German covering detachment defending the southern end of the bridge - 70-80 infantry soldiers with machine guns, 75-mm field cannons and assault guns, and at 7 o'clock connected with the battalion of Captain Borisov on the opposite shore. At the same time, a strike detachment of marines and a regiment of the 80th rifle regiment break through to the bridge, which are connected with the exhausted landing force. Scouts Kulnev and Minin jump out from under the bridge with grenades in their hands and burn two enemy tanks, Moskalchuk and Borisov, hiding behind a fence, crush the Germans with machine guns. Past them, under the cover of fire of Koval's artillery division, "along the other line" rushes to seize the bridgehead of Panchenko's 8th Infantry Regiment. By lunchtime, he is fixed on the left bank with one battalion and, not noticing that Pilosyan's paratroopers are sitting in the same trenches with him, Ryabchenko's guards and a bunch of all kinds of people, he holds out "until the units of the 20th Guards Rifle Corps approach." Finally, at 4 p.m., under the cover of a smokescreen, 16 self-propelled vehicles of Major Vasiliev rush across the bridge at full speed.

I almost forgot! There is also a chronicle of the glorious deeds of the Engineering Troops:

"On April 1, at the final stage of the struggle for Vienna, assault groups from the 11th assault engineer-sapper brigade of Colonel A. G. Zagrebin, in cooperation with the landing force landed by the Danube River Flotilla, captured and cleared the bridge across the Danube. The sappers of the 54th separate assault engineer-sapper battalion, rapidly bursting onto the bridge, cut the explosive network connected to the charges, and the units of the 55th separate assault engineer-sapper battalion removed eight charges with a total weight of up to 600 kg"

In general, the bridge was large, with a very wide canvas, there were many heroes on it and under it, and there were so many "tol and pyroxylin" that it was possible to blow up half of Vienna - about 20 tons. Only the soldier who, the only one of all, was reported by Sovin

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uniform bureau: "One of our fighters accidentally discovered an underground passage leading to the Danube ..."

By April 15, the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian Front reached the line of Tuln, St. Pölten, Berndorf, Maribor, the Drava River, where they were temporarily stopped by order of the Headquarters. On this day, the 39th Guards Rifle Corps crossed the Danube and captured Korneuburg. Soon the troops of the 46th Army approached this city.

During the battles for Vienna in the center and on the left wing of the 3rd Ukrainian Front, the offensive continued in the general direction towards Graz. TO; in mid-April, the troops of the front reached the Eastern Alps. In order to have time to make a contribution to the cause of "the defeat of German fascism", the 6th infantry division of the Hungarian People's Army arrived under Tolbukhin's operational subordination, which, according to the testimony of the Front's PMC, Colonel General A.S. Zheltov, instructed to "eliminate gangs of SS men and detachments of saboteurs -" spearmen "in the Alps.

In late April-early May, Soviet troops operating in Austria reached the line of Linz, Hafenz, Klagenfurt, where they met with American troops.

On April 8, the troops of the 1st Bulgarian Army reached the Varazhdina region, where they temporarily went on the defensive with the task of preventing the enemy from breaking through in this direction. On April 12, south of Dratva, the 3rd Yugoslav army went on the offensive. [On May 0, Yugoslav troops, together with the Bulgarian units, captured the city of Maribor. In mid-May, the 1st Bulgarian army reached the line of the mountain peaks of Cor-Alpe, where they met with the British units. Here her battle path ended. On May 24, the army was withdrawn from the 3rd Ukrainian Front and departed for their homeland.

Having defeated Army Group "South", the troops of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian Fronts liberated the western part of Hungary, a significant part of Czechoslovakia, the eastern regions of Austria with its capital Vienna. Germany lost the economically important Nagykanizsa oil region and one of the last major industrial centers, the Vienna Industrial. At the same time, the idea of the Alpine Fortress was finally buried. Hitler refused to move

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to the command post in Berchtesgaden, deciding to meet his fate in Berlin.

The Red Army inflicted a major defeat on the southern wing of the strategic front of the German troops. For 30 days, the troops of the two fronts fought 150-250 kilometers. They defeated 32 enemy divisions, capturing more than 130 thousand soldiers and officers, capturing and destroying over 1345 tanks and self-propelled guns, 2250 field guns.

The troops of the 3rd Ukrainian Front and the 46th Army of the 2nd Ukrainian Front lost a total of 168 thousand people during the Vienna operation (including about 39 thousand

irretrievable losses), about 800 guns and mortars, 600 tanks and self-propelled guns, over 600 aircraft. The losses of the Bulgarian army amounted to 9.8 thousand people.

On April 30 Army Group South was renamed Army Group Austria.

The successful actions of the Soviet troops in the direction of Vienna, the entry of the 3rd Ukrainian Front into the eastern regions of Austria hastened the liberation of Yugoslavia. The troops of Army Group E operating there were isolated from Germany and began a general withdrawal.

TO BERLIN! LAST TRY

While the Red Army was solving important tasks away from the Berlin direction, major changes took place on the Western Front. In the first decade of March, the Allied Expeditionary Force occupied the Rhineland and captured the strategic railway bridge over the Rhine at Remagen; soon five American divisions entrenched themselves on the right bank. Hitler from such a "betrayal" was shocked. On March 23, an unexpected night attack by the Americans managed to create a bridgehead at Oppenheim. The further plans of the allies provided for a broad offensive along the entire front, during which it was supposed, first of all, to destroy the most powerful German grouping concentrated in the Ruhr industrial region.

On March 24, the 2nd British and 9th American armies crossed the Rhine in the Wesel region and launched an offensive around the Ruhr from the north. The next day the American 1st and 3rd armies struck from the Remagen and Oppenheim bridgeheads. On March 26, the 7th American and 1st French armies crossed the Rhine at Mannheim and Karlsruhe. The German front collapsed unexpectedly quickly. | April, the advanced tank groups of the 9th and 1st armies met in Paderborn, closing the encirclement. About 370 thousand soldiers and officers of Army Group B fell into the giant "cauldron". Having achieved success at the first stage of the operation, the Anglo-American command decided to shift the main efforts from the northern to the central direction. On April 4, three American armies rushed along the shortest direction to the Elbe.

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Here, Comrade Stalin became seriously concerned that the sworn allies, in violation of the Yalta agreements, might invade the Soviet zone of occupation and be the first to enter Berlin. To be honest, such thoughts wandered in the minds of Western politicians and the military, especially the English ones. So [1] April Churchill wrote to Roosevelt:

"I say quite sincerely that Berlin retains an important strategic importance. Nothing will drive all German forces capable of resistance to such despair as the fall of Berlin..."

This problem has another aspect that you and I should consider. The Russian armies in the south will undoubtedly occupy all of Austria and enter Vienna. If they take Berlin in addition, will not the idea be fixed in their minds that they allegedly made the main contribution to our common victory, and will this not cause serious and even insurmountable difficulties in the future? I think that, for political reasons, we should advance as far east as possible in Germany and, of course, take Berlin if it comes within our reach. Such a course seems reasonable from a military point of view as well."

However, General Eisenhower considered it more important to launch the main attack on Leipzig, that is, much south of Berlin, with the aim of cutting the enemy forces west of the Elbe and meeting with Soviet troops at the Erfurt-Leipzig Dresden line. According to intelligence information, "the main German government institutions" were transferred here, it was South Germany and Austria that were to become the last stronghold of the Nazi resistance - the "national fortress". Proving the expediency of his plan, Eisenhower wrote to the Chairman of the US Chiefs of Staff, General George Marshall:

"I was trying to emphasize that my advance into the Leipzig area is not only the right direction for a decisive blow, since it leads to the complete dismemberment of the enemy, but also provides me with maximum mobility. Any time we can take Berlin without heavy losses, we will, of course, do it. Noah I guess

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it is unwise from a military point of view to make Berlin the main target under the given conditions, especially considering the fact that it is only 35 miles from the Russian positions. I am the first to admit that the war is being waged for political purposes, and if the Joint Chiefs of Staff decides that the capture of Berlin by the troops of the Western Allies matters more than purely military considerations in this theater, then I will readily reorganize my plans and thinking to carry out such an operation.

The commander of the 12th Army Group, General Omar Bradley, estimating that a breakthrough to Berlin could cost the loss of 100 thousand people, said: "A price high enough to pay it only in the name of prestige, especially if we have to retreat later and give the fruits of victory to another guy."

Eisenhower, who enjoyed great prestige among the troops and in Washington, did not have to make changes "in thinking". His arguments convinced the Joint Chiefs of Staff and were supported by Roosevelt.

As early as March 28, Eisenhower took an unprecedented step: in violation of the accepted subordination, he addressed a personal message to Marshal Stalin - as the Supreme Commander to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief. In the letter, the general revealed all his intentions, confirming the refusal of the Americans to take part in the battle for Berlin, and asked Iosif Vissarionovich to mutually share the plans of the Russians. The British pointed out sarcastically: "This is about the same as if, say, Marshal Tolbukhin sent a personal message to the President of the United States or the Prime Minister of Great Britain with a request to inform about the plans of the Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean Theater."

Stalin received a letter in the evening | April. He treated General Eisenhower with respect, but did not believe the letter. In politics, it is not promises that count, but opportunities. The Supreme Commander was convinced that the Allies had the desire and the ability to capture the capital of Germany before the Red Army did it, and the Germans, in order to

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to spoil the hated Bolsheviks, are able to open before

them front. Therefore, Berlin must be taken as soon as possible.

by ourselves. It's time to end this war.

The information about the contacts between representatives of Field Marshal Alexander's staff and General Karl Wolff that took place in Switzerland in mid-March caused an extremely negative reaction from the Supreme Command. It was about the possibility of the surrender of German troops in Italy. Although the information about the negotiations in Bern was obtained not by Stirlitz-Isaev, but quite officially by the British ambassador, Stalin interpreted the event unambiguously: certain "reactionary circles in England and the USA" were preparing to conclude a separate peace with Germany behind the back of the Soviet Union, "bearing the brunt of wars". This is despite the fact that it was Churchill who first put forward the slogan about the "destruction of Hitlerism" - even at a time when the Kremlin sent congratulatory telegrams to Hitler, and Molotov publicly stated that it was pointless to fight Hitlerism.

Churchill and Roosevelt received harsh and insulting letters accusing them of failing to fulfill their obligations, colluding with the Germans, and even the Allied troops were advancing somehow too quickly:

"You claim that there have been no negotiations yet. It must be assumed that you were not fully informed. As for my military colleagues, based on the data they have, they have no doubt that the negotiations took place and they ended with an agreement with the Germans, by virtue of which the German commander on the Western Front, Marshal Kesselring, agreed to open the front and let through Anglo-American troops to the east, and the Anglo-Americans promised in return to ease the terms of the truce for the Germans.

I understand that there are certain advantages for the Anglo-American troops as a result of these separate negotiations in Bern or somewhere else, since the Anglo-American troops are able to advance deep into Germany almost without any resistance from the side.

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Germans, but why was it necessary to hide this from the Russians and why did they not warn their Russian allies about this?

And so it turns out that at this moment the Germans on the Western Front have actually stopped the war against England and America. At the same time, the Germans continue the war with Russia, an ally of England and America.

It is clear that such a situation can in no way serve the cause of maintaining and strengthening trust between our countries."

In response messages, Roosevelt expressed extreme indignation towards Stalin's "informers", wrote about the "vile interpretation" of his actions and the regrettable "atmosphere of fear and mistrust."

The crack in relations between the allies, which appeared almost immediately after the Yalta agreements, continued to widen.

In the last days of March, marshals G.K. Zhukov and I.S. Konev. | In April, a representative meeting was held in the Kremlin, at which the general plan for the attack on Berlin was approved. Konev recalls:

"As soon as we had time to say hello, Stalin asked a question:

Do you know how the situation is developing?

Zhukov and I replied that according to the information we had on our fronts, we knew the situation. Stalin turned to Shtemenko and told him:

- Read the telegram to them.

Shtemenko read aloud the telegram, the essence of which was briefly as follows: the Anglo-American command was preparing an operation to capture Berlin, setting the task of capturing it before the Soviet Army. The main grouping is being created under the command of Field Marshal Montgomery. The direction of the main attack is planned north of the Ruhr, along the shortest route that separates the main grouping of British troops from Berlin. The telegram listed a number of preliminary measures that were carried out by the allied command: the creation of a grouping, the concentration of troops. The telegram ended with

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To all intents and purposes, the plan to take Berlin ahead of the Soviet Army is considered by the Allied headquarters as quite realistic, and preparations for its implementation are in full swing.

After Shtemenko had read the telegram to the end, Stalin turned to Zhukov and me:

- So who will take Berlin, we or the allies?

It so happened that I was the first to answer this question, and I answered:

"We will take Berlin, and we will take it before the Allies."

The goal of the upcoming operation was to quickly defeat the main forces of the Vistula and Center Army Groups, capture Berlin and, having reached the Elbe River, join up with the troops of the Western Allies. This was to deprive Germany of the possibility of further organized resistance and force her to unconditional surrender.

The idea of the Soviet command was to break through the enemy defenses along the Oder and Neisse with powerful blows from three fronts and, developing an offensive in depth, encircle the main grouping of German troops in the Berlin direction with its simultaneous division into several parts and the subsequent destruction of each - DOWN THEM.

The results of the meeting were confirmed by the directives of the Headquarters, signed on April 2-6.

The commander of the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front was ordered to prepare and conduct an operation to capture the capital of Germany and reach the Elbe River no later than 12-15 days. The front was supposed to deliver three blows: the main one - directly on Berlin from the Kustrinsky bridgehead and two auxiliary ones - north and south of Berlin. Tank armies had to be brought in after breaking through the defenses in order to develop success by bypassing the city from the north and northeast: the essence of the maneuver was to prevent reinforcements from entering Berlin, but most importantly, "treacherous" allies. The participation of tankers in the assault was not foreseen.

The 1st Ukrainian Front was supposed to defeat the gruppi

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the enemy in the area of Cottbus and south of Berlin, isolate the main forces of Army Group Center and, no later than the 10-12th day, capture the Belitz, Wittenberg line and further along the Elbe River to Dresden. The front was ordered to deliver two blows: the main one - in the general direction of Spremberg and the auxiliary one - on Dresden. After the fall of Berlin, "keep in mind" to advance on Leipzig.

However, Marshal Konev was also obsessed with a passionate desire to see Berlin, "to master it with the power of his weapons" and was very worried that he was being pushed to the other side. From the very beginning suggested "in case of surprises" to provide for the turn of part of the forces of the 1st Ukrainian Front to the north, according to S.M. Shtemenko, found the support of the General Staff in this matter: "The work of the General Staff in planning the final strikes was extremely complicated by Stalin's categorical decision on the special role of the 1st Belorussian Front. It was not possible to capture such a large city as Berlin, prepared in advance for defense, by one front, even such a powerful one as the 1st Belorussian. The situation urgently demanded that at least the 1st Ukrainian Front be aimed at Berlin. Moreover, of course, it was necessary to somehow avoid an ineffective frontal strike by the main

forces."

Stalin did not correct anything in the text of the directives, but by defining the areas of responsibility of the fronts, he managed to introduce an element of uncertainty that spurred on both Konev and Zhukov:

"On the map reflecting the plan of the operation, the Supreme Commander silently crossed out that part of the demarcation line that cut off the 1st Ukrainian Front from Berlin, brought it to the settlement of Lubben (60 kilometers southeast of the capital) and cut it off.

"Whoever breaks in first, let him take Berlin," he told us later.

The General Staff was pleased with this turn of affairs.

Ivan Stepanovich was literally inspired by the "Solomon's decision":

"While drawing this line with a pencil, Stalin suddenly cut it off at the city of Lübben, located about sixty kilometers

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miles southeast of Berlin. He broke off and did not lead further. He did not say anything at the same time, but, I think, Marshal Zhukov also saw a certain meaning in this. The dividing line was cut off approximately where we were supposed to go by the third day of the operation. Further (obviously, depending on the situation) the possibility of showing initiative on the part of the command of the fronts was tacitly assumed.

For me, in any case, the stoppage of the demarcation line on Lübben meant that the speed of the breakthrough, the speed and maneuverability of actions on the right wing of our front, could later create a situation in which our attack from the south on Berlin would be advantageous.

Was there an unspoken call for a competition of fronts in this break of the dividing line on Lubbene? I accept that possibility."

The troops of the 2nd Belorussian Front were tasked with forcing the Oder, defeating the enemy's Stettin grouping, and capturing the Anklam-Wahren-Wittensberge line no later than the 12th-15th day. Under favorable conditions, they were supposed to, acting part of the forces from behind the right wing of the 1st Belorussian Front, roll up the enemy defenses along the left bank of the Oder.

The beginning of the offensive of the troops of the 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts was scheduled for April 16. Four days later, the troops of the 2nd Belorussian Front were to join. 2.5 million people, 41.6 thousand guns and mortars, 6250 tanks and self-propelled guns, 7800 combat aircraft - 189 rifle divisions, 13 artillery divisions, 21 tank and mechanized corps were preparing for the "last battle". From the point of view of Zhukov, who was forced to attack with an open right flank in the first, most stressful days, "it would be better to wait five or six days and start the Berlin operation simultaneously on three fronts." Yes, and the ammunition generously spent in the unplanned Pomeranian operation should have been accumulated more. However, for Stalin, political moments always prevailed over military ones - this is not America for you, and the loss of extra hundreds

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not thousands of people - the normal price for the opportunity to remind the world of his "decisive contribution" for sixty years.

Churchill knew what he was talking about. Stalin knew what he was doing. The flag over the Reichstag wrote off all the miscalculations and crimes of the communist leadership and remains the only bright spot in the history of the USSR that has gone nowhere. Perhaps also Yura Gagarin.

Having signed the directives for the capture of Berlin, Stalin at the same time gave an answer to Eisenhower's message, in which he simply fooled the Americans. The Supreme Commander approved the General's proposal to meet on the Erfurt-Leipzig-Dresden line, agreed that Berlin "has already lost its former strategic second half of May, after the end of the operation in Austria.

Three Soviet fronts in the Berlin direction were opposed by three German armies from the army groups "Vistula" and "Center". They had 33 infantry, 4 tank and 7 tank grenadier divisions, separate battle groups and garrisons of "fortresses" - about 500 thousand people, 10.4 thousand guns and mortars, 1200 tanks and self-propelled guns.

Air support was provided by General Ritter von Greim's 6th Air Fleet with 1,524 aircraft. In addition, 426 German air defense aircraft could be used to cover Berlin. True, there was only fuel for two days of intensive combat work. Yes and quality

The training of German pilots has declined markedly.

In the Berlin direction, a layered defense was prepared, the construction of which began in January 1945. It was based on the Oder-Neissen defensive line and the Berlin defensive area. The Oder-Neissen frontier consisted of three lanes, between which there were intermediate and cut-off positions in the most important directions. The total depth of this boundary reached 20–40 kilometers. The leading edge of the main line of defense passed along the left bank of the Oder and Neisse rivers,

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with the exception of the areas of Frankfurt, Guben, Forst and Muskau, where the enemy continued to hold bridgeheads on the right bank. Settlements were turned into centers of resistance. Using locks on the Oder and numerous canals, the Germans prepared a number of areas for flooding. A second line of defense was created 10-20 kilometers from the forward edge. The most equipped in terms of engineering, it was on the Seelow Heights - in front of the Kyustrinsky bridgehead. The third strip was located at a distance of 20-40 kilometers from the forward edge.

Particular attention was paid to the organization of anti-tank defense, which was based on a combination of artillery fire, assault guns and tanks with engineering barriers, dense mining of tank-accessible directions and the use of natural obstacles. To combat tanks, it was planned to make extensive use of the anti-aircraft artillery of the Berlin defensive area.

The outer defensive bypass of the Berlin region ran along rivers, canals and lakes 25-40 kilometers from the center. It was based on large settlements, turned into centers of resistance. The internal defensive bypass ran along the outskirts of the suburbs. All strongholds and positions were interconnected in terms of fire. Numerous anti-tank obstacles and barbed wire were erected on the streets. The total depth of defense on this bypass was 6 kilometers. The third - urban - bypass passed along the district railway.

The main operational reserves were located northeast of Berlin and in the area of Cottbus. Their removal from the front line did not exceed 30 kilometers.

The German generals, in contrast to the Fuhrer, who saw only the numbers of divisions and considered morale, the state of defense and the combat capability of the troops in the Berlin direction as unsatisfactory as the main factor in victory:

“The positions of the Germans in terms of engineering were poorly equipped, in some areas

tactical density

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troops were completely inadequate. Resorting to all sorts of temporary measures, the Germans somehow managed to put their troops in order. However, they were poorly armed. The main force that could still be counted on were the small remnants of the old battle-hardened divisions. The rest of the formations were created with great difficulty from among the convalescent companies, spare parts, Volkssturm detachments, consolidated units of various military departments, headquarters and rear institutions, as well as from former sailors, pilots and persons who served in paramilitary detachments labor service. The command staff and the rank and file in the bulk did not have combat experience, the units lacked equipment. Armament was extremely diverse; so, along with the most modern small arms in the units, one could find captured weapons from almost all European

armies, as well as long outdated weapons of German origin distributed from warehouses. Only a few tank formations were fully equipped with equipment and people...

Despite the availability of fairly accurate data on the enemy, even now it was impossible to convince Hitler that the main danger still threatened Berlin. On the contrary, he expected that the enemy would deliver the main blow south of the Sudetenland in the direction of Prague, and therefore transferred part of the reorganized tank divisions to the disposal of the army group

"Center".

On April 12, in the midst of decisive events, President Roosevelt died. He was an outstanding figure who enjoyed great prestige in the Allied camp. Of great importance were the close personal contacts established between the leaders of the Big Three. Who is Harry Truman, who has never dealt with diplomatic or military issues, what are his political views and personal qualities, no one knew. And this worried the members of the anti-Hitler coalition. But in Berlin there was a real holiday. In the unexpected death of "the greatest crime

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for all times and peoples" Hitler saw a sign from heaven that Germany would be saved, just as the death of Queen Elizabeth in 1761 saved Frederick the Great from collapse.

The Führer could not believe that in post-war Europe "no independent role was written" for Germany.

On April 12-13, the advanced units of the 9th American Army crossed the Elbe north of Magdeburg and south of Wittenberg. From here, the distance to Berlin was less than 100 kilometers. To the south, the 1st American Army on April 14 approached Dessau, located on the Mulda River not far from its confluence with the Elbe, and part of the forces successfully advanced to Leipzig. In the north, the British reached the Elbe in the region of Hamburg. Under these conditions, Eisenhower decided to suspend the offensive to the east, pull up the rear and focus on the flanks:

1) strike in the direction of Lubeck, Kiel, clear Holland and the coast of the North Sea from the enemy, liberate Denmark and ensure the possibility of transferring large forces to Norway;

2) break into the Danube valley towards the Russians and liquidate the "national fortress" before the enemy is able to concentrate his forces there and complete the creation of defensive lines.

Eisenhower thought first of all of capturing areas "where the enemy can organize an effective defense for the last time" and prolong the war. Only after this basic task has been solved can one think of taking Berlin.

So, the general summed up in his message to the Joint Chiefs of Staff: "The essence of my plan is this: to stop on the Elbe and clear the flanks." As expected, the British were not entirely happy that Berlin was given a secondary place, but, having studied the data on the balance and distribution of forces, they were forced to agree with the Eisenhower plan.

Marshal G.K. Zhukov decided to strike the main blow with his forces

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four combined arms - 47th, 3rd and 5th shock, 8th guards - and two tank armies - 1st and 2nd guards. On the very first day, the combined arms armies were supposed to break through two lines of the Oder defensive line in three sections with a total length of 24

kilometers. In the future, it was planned to develop an offensive against Berlin. On the sixth day of the operation, it was planned to completely capture the capital of the Third Reich and reach the eastern shore of Lake Havel; here the main role was assigned to the 5th shock and 8th guards armies. The 47th Army, advancing on the right flank, was supposed to bypass Berlin from the north and reach the Elbe on the 11th day. To build up the efforts of the strike force, it was planned to use the second echelon of the front - the 3rd army of A.V. Gorbатов. The 7th Guards Cavalry Corps remained in reserve.

The tank armies were supposed to be brought into battle at a depth of 6-9 kilometers after the combined arms armies had captured the strongholds on the Seelow Heights. The main task of the 2nd Guards Tank Army was to bypass Berlin from the north and northeast and capture its northwestern part. The 1st Guards Tank Army, reinforced by the 11th Tank Corps, was given the task of attacking Berlin from the east and capturing its eastern and then southern suburbs. According to Zhukov, he, after thinking hard, in order to avoid "any accidents" and in violation of the directive of the Headquarters, ordered Katukov's tank army to be placed in its original position behind the 8th Guards Army and corrected its "trajectory". Stalin

agreed: "You know better where you are."

Auxiliary strikes were planned: on the right - by the forces of the 61st Army and the 1st Army of the Polish Army in the general direction on Eberswalde, Zandau; on the left - by the troops of the 69th and 33rd armies together with the 2nd guards cavalry corps on Furstenwalga.

The Dnieper military flotilla operating in the zone of the 1st Belorussian Front under the command of Rear Admiral V.V. Grigoryeva received the task of two brigades of river ships to assist the troops of the 5th shock and 8th guards armies in crossing the Oder and breaking through the enemy

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of defense on the Kustra bridgehead. The third brigade was supposed to assist the troops of the 33rd Army in the Furstenberg area and provide anti-mine defense of mine routes.

In addition to Gorbатов's army, the front, according to Zhukovsky's requests, additionally received the 3rd Leningrad artillery breakthrough corps, 2 guards mortar divisions and 3 rocket artillery regiments, 3 anti-aircraft artillery divisions, 3 anti-tank brigades, 2 amphibious battalions, 6th bomber (on magnificent Tu-2) and 1st guards fighter air corps, 188th bomber (on "pawns") and 240th fighter air divisions, about 900 armored vehicles and 570 aircraft of "Russian-Russian" rash", 30 thousand people marching replenishment.

In total, Zhukov had at hand 77 rifle divisions, 2 cavalry, 2 mechanized and 5 tank corps, 6 tank and 2 self-propelled artillery brigades, 2 fortified areas - about 1 million people, 1642 tanks and 1417 self-propelled guns, 21 thousand guns and mortars, including 1,500 launchers and racks of rocket artillery, 4,200 combat aircraft.

To ensure the maximum force of the initial strike, the operational formations of most combined-arms armies were one-echelon, while the battle formations of corps and divisions were built in two, and sometimes even three echelons. The rifle divisions operating in the direction of the main attack (36 divisions) received zones 2 kilometers wide. The density of tanks for direct infantry support reached 20-44 units per kilometer of the breakthrough area, the density of artillery - about 270-290 guns and mortars. More than 14,000 guns and rocket launchers were concentrated on the bridgehead, which "were to bring down 358 tons of metal on the enemy for every kilometer of the front" (artillery of tank armies, the Danube flotilla and everything that is "smaller" than 76 mm caliber is not considered). The Soviet command was confident that with such a concentration of guns, the enemy defenses would be reliably suppressed to a depth of 10-12 kilometers within 30 minutes. Support for infantry and tank attacks to a depth of 2 kilometers should

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was carried out by a double, and to a depth of 4 kilometers by a single fire shaft.

The 16th Air Army (28 air divisions and 7 separate regiments - 3188 aircraft, including 1567 fighters, 762 bombers, 731 attack aircraft) had to reliably cover the crossings and places of concentration of troops, at night during the artillery preparation by Po-2 aircraft to strike at headquarters, communication centers and artillery positions of the enemy. Assistance in breaking through the defense was provided by the aviation of the 18th Air Army of Marshal A.E. Golovanov, which included 800 long-range bomb carriers. With the start of the offensive, attack aircraft and bombers were to concentrate their main efforts on German strongholds and centers of resistance, conduct reconnaissance up to the Elbe River and on the flanks of strike groups. To support the solo 5th shock and 8th guards armies, each was allocated a bomber and assault air corps. Only one "problem" spoiled the mood of General V.I. Chuikov: "We had strong aviation, but it was used to strike at the same positions that the artillery was aiming at. Without reconnaissance data, the pilots could not have known about the carefully camouflaged enemy defense lines in the forests." In addition, "our weak means of military intelligence did not make it possible to find out the tactical depth of the enemy, the formation of his battle formations, his reserves." Even the outline of the German front line captured by aerial photographs seemed doubtful - the trick of leaving the first defensive line in advance was well known. And one more thing: the red commanders were still unimportantly oriented on the ground. It was only clear that the Seelow Heights were a tough nut to crack and, as the Leader brilliantly predicted, "a serious fight is coming."

The actions of the Polish Army were provided by their own aviation - 320 vehicles. The Polish Air Force was armed with Soviet aircraft, which were mostly flown by Soviet pilots. They were commanded by Lieutenant General F.P. Polynin, his deputy for combat training was General

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Major K.D. Dmitriev, commander of the 1st Polish air corps - Major General F.A. Agaltsov, 1st Polish bomber air division - Colonel M.I. Martynov, 2nd Assault Air Division - Colonel Sh.A. Dzamashvili, 4th mixed air division - Colonel G.P. Turykin... For the sake of objectivity, in his memoirs Polynin specifically notes that "a lot of Pole pilots served in the units." True, the Poles, upon closer examination, often turned out to be citizens of the USSR, such as, for example, the "Pole by nationality" Colonel I. Smaga, the former head of combat training of the Air Force of the North Caucasian Military District. The Polish formations were operationally subordinate to Zhukov.

From April 5 to April 7, command and staff exercises were held, a game was played on maps and a model of Berlin, in which the command of the front and armies, commanders and headquarters of all branches of the military, and commanders of individual corps participated. "During the game," writes G.K. Zhukov, - in the process of losing the breakthrough of the enemy's tactical defense on the Oder, the question of the use of tank armies was seriously discussed. Given the presence of a strong tactical defense on the Seelow Heights, it was decided to bring tank armies into battle only after the capture of these heights. According to the results of the games, exercises were held in formations and units.

The marshal paid much attention to the observance of military secrets, measures of secrecy and camouflage. The regimental commanders were ordered to set tasks three days before the offensive orally; the Red Army men were explained "that our task is a stubborn defense for a long time"; in order to divert attention from the Kyustrinsky bridgehead, a false concentration was organized in other areas.

Former commander of the 150th Infantry Division, General V.M. Shatilov mentions the strictest rules for conducting reconnaissance: "The commander was also required to take part in it.

corps, and commanders of divisions who were to attack from the bridgehead, and in divisions - commanders of rifle and attached regiments, commanders of artillery. In this regard, all generals and senior officers were ordered to go for reconnaissance in small

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groups and in sergeant uniforms. Even the commanders of the units defending on the bridgehead knew nothing about this masquerade. They were simply warned that, they say, intelligence sergeants from the headquarters will work for you these days, who should not be asked about anything and who should be assisted in everything. Well, the idea of dressing up was not bad, because the appearance on the front line of a large number of generals and colonels would not escape the attention of the enemy and would indicate that something serious was being prepared, and in the coming days. On the morning of April 12, "senior sergeant" Perevertkin (commander of the 79th rifle corps), "senior sergeant" Asafov (commander of the 207th rifle division), I, "junior sergeant" Shatilov (the overcoat was very large for me and bristled in all directions), and other "sergeants" crossed the bridge over the Oder and in groups of two or three people dispersed along the communication lines. In the same way, under the guise of signalmen with telephone coils and poles, representatives from the tank armies examined the crossings and areas of concentration.

Over 100 thousand Germans were resettled from the 25-kilometer front line in order to "ensure the secrecy of the deployment of troops". At the same time, "a huge amount of work had to be done to seize more than one tens of thousands of German men, form work columns from them and send them to the Soviet Union."

But can you hide such an "awl": "Numerous replenishment poured into the troops. Tens of thousands of tons of fuel were brought to the Oder, buried in the ground, camouflaged in forests; hundreds of thousands of shells, mines, bombs were placed near the firing positions. Only on the first day of the operation, it was planned to use 1.5 front-line ammunition sets - 1,147,659 shells and mines, 49,940 rockets, which in total amounted to 2,382 wagons. During the preparation period, 25 bridges across the Oder were built and 40 ferry crossings were prepared;

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Plus, spring is here.

"Water flooded lowlands and meadows," recalls Chuikov, "arable lands, potato plantations turned into marshy mud. There were few main roads from the Oder to the Seelow Heights. There were only four such roads in the offensive zone of the 8th Guards Army. Cars and military equipment could move only along them. Turn aside and you will immediately find yourself in a swamp. If you don't get stuck, then you're lucky - get back on the road. The Seelow Heights dominated the valley, cut by streams and canals. From them, the enemy looked through the entire bridgehead. It was very difficult for us to covertly make movements. And I wanted to quietly bring troops, especially artillery and tanks, to their original positions. But how can we do this when the enemy clearly sees our positions not only on the bridgehead, but also on the eastern coast? Even the darkness of the night did not help us out: the enemy probed the area with the beams of searchlights. Searchlights went out - lighting bombs dropped from reconnaissance aircraft flashed, and the whole valley was again in full view, before the eyes of the Nazis. The camouflage of the troops was complicated by the fact that the trees had not yet blossomed, and spring and groundwater did not allow them to dig into the ground.

The 6th Air Fleet had 244 reconnaissance aircraft, and the Germans knew how to use them, as well as conduct technical, intelligence and other reconnaissance due to their ability to make long-term systematic efforts. The headquarters of Army Group Vistula knew in general terms the plan of the general Soviet offensive, and the date for its start - approximately April 15-16 - was already set on April 7 - before ours knew it.

divisional and regimental commanders. General Bernhard, head of the rear guard troops of the 9th Army, testified during interrogation: "I can categorically state that our command had absolutely accurate information about the upcoming big offensive of the Russian troops in the direction of Berlin. In particular, on April 5 or 6, the commander of the 9th Army, General of the Infantry Busse,

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a meeting attended by the corps commanders, myself, the chief of staff, and the chiefs of services of the 9th Army.

The head of the reconnaissance department of the 9th Army, Lieutenant Colonel (I forgot his last name), made a report on the situation and on the enemy opposing the 9th Army. The head of the intelligence department of the army pointed out that we were confronted by the troops of General Zhukov, that after the completion of the operation in Eastern Pomerania, two tank armies arrived here and that the Russians had tenfold superiority in tanks and artillery, and fivefold superiority in infantry. .

In order to achieve surprise, it was decided to launch the attack 1.5-2 hours before dawn. In order to illuminate the area ahead and blind the enemy, Zhukov came up with the idea of using searchlight installations placed at intervals of 150-200 meters in the offensive zones of the 3rd and 5th shock, 8th Guards and 69th armies. Theoretically, they were supposed to create a light field 5 kilometers deep. In polygon conditions, everything seemed to work out smoothly. Chuikov recalls: "At a special exercise organized by Marshal Zhukov a week before the offensive, we, the commanders of armies and corps, tested the effect of searchlights on ourselves both in the offensive, when they shone from the rear, and in defense, when the light beat in face. It turned out not bad..." Everyone liked the spectacular night spectacle, and the novelty was approved. 143 anti-aircraft searchlights were withdrawn from the air defense units and installed in equipped positions 200-300 meters from the front line. Moreover, searchlights, "placed under the very nose of the enemy, served our heroic girls."

23 divisions, including 5 motorized divisions and one tank division, were defending in front of the Belorussian Front in a zone of up to 175 kilometers. North of Berlin, on the 25-kilometer section Schwedt - the mouth of the Alte Oder River, two infantry divisions of the 46th Panzer Corps of the 3rd Panzer Army dug in. In the rear of the corps, in the Mittelvalde area, the operational reserve was concentrated - the 11th and 23rd SS Panzergrenadier Divisions. Against the left wing of the front

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Three infantry divisions of the 5th Army Corps of the 4th Tank Army were defending.

The path to the capital of Germany, occupying a 120-kilometer line from Alte Oder to Ratzdorf, was blocked by the 9th Army - the 101st Army, the 56th Tank, the 11th Army SS, the 5th Mountain Rifle Corps and the garrison of the Frankfurt Fortress ". The first line housed 11 divisions, manned at the expense of the personnel of the Luftwaffe, police and Volkssturm units, the second line - three. The army was reinforced by three people's artillery corps, two anti-aircraft artillery divisions, [11th training self-propelled brigade, anti-tank combat group "1001 Nights", 502nd SS heavy tank battalion, railway artillery battalion. Theodore Busse's reserve consisted of the 18th Panzergrenadier Division and the 156th Training Division. In total, the army had about 200 thousand people, 2625 guns, 550 tanks and self-propelled guns. The densest grouping was created by the enemy against the Kyustrinsky bridgehead, where the operational density of his forces in this sector was 4-5 kilometers per division and 50 guns and mortars, as well as 12 tanks and self-propelled guns per kilometer of the front.

Two days before the start of the operation, in order to clarify the true front line of the enemy's defense, "power reconnaissance" was carried out by order of the front commander. On April 14, after a 10-minute fire attack, penal companies and reinforced rifle battalions from the divisions of the first echelon began to operate in the direction of the main attack. Then, in a number of areas, rifle and separate tank regiments were brought into battle. During the two-day battles, they managed to

seize separate sections of the first and second trenches, and advance up to 5 kilometers in some directions. In a number of places, the troops overcame the zone of the most dense minefields. The results of reconnaissance in force showed that the bulk of the infantry and artillery were held by the Germans on the second line. So, the command of the 5th shock army came to the conclusion: "To carry out full artillery preparation for the first rube

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zhu and the tactical depth adjacent to it did not make sense.

Political workers instilled in the personnel "fierce hatred for the enemy, boundless devotion to the "Motherland" and "unfolded propaganda of Leninist ideas" in connection with the upcoming 75th anniversary of the ever-living, although slightly moldy during his stay in Kuibyshev, Ilyich. Studied with the fighters the last article of Ehrenburg:

"There are agony, filled with greatness. Germany is dying miserably—no pathos, no dignity...

Someone to capitulate. There is no Germany: there is a colossal gang that scatters when it comes to responsibility...

A foreign reader will ask: why did the Germans try so hard to defend Kustrin? Why are they fighting furiously in the streets of Vienna, surrounded by the enmity of the Viennese? Why did the Germans desperately defend Koenigsberg, separated by hundreds of kilometers from the front on the Oder? In order to answer these questions, one must remember the terrible wounds of Russia, which many do not want to know about and which many want to forget... Whoever forgets this is not a man, but a wretched moth...

Woe to our Motherland, grief to all orphans - our grief - you are with us in these days of victories, you fan the fire of intransigence, you wake up the conscience of the sleeping, you throw a shadow, a shadow of a mutilated birch, a shadow of a gallows, a shadow of a weeping mother in the spring of the world . I try to restrain myself, I try to speak as quietly as possible, as sternly as possible, but I have no words. I have no words to remind the world once again of what the Germans have done to my land."

However, on April 14, the usual scribbling of the foundations of political literacy received a new impetus in connection with the publication in the newspapers Pravda and Krasnaya Zvezda of the article "Comrade Ehrenburg asks", published under the signature of the head of the Propaganda and Agitation Department of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks G.F. Alexandrov with the suggestion of the Leader of all peoples.

What exactly did Ilya Grigoryevich "simplify" invariably, together with other colleagues in the workshop, for four years writing

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talking about the same thing: about the criminal essence of Nazism, about birch trees, about hatred, about revenge, but never called for the total extermination of the Germans - so, slightly reduce the population? The co-authors of the article first attributed to Ehrenburg "the erroneous point of view that the entire population of Germany should share the fate of the Hitlerite clique", and then explained the correct point of view: "The Red Army, fulfilling its great liberation mission, is fighting for the liquidation of the Hitlerite army , the Hitlerite state, the Hitlerite government, but never set and does not set as its goal the extermination of the German people. Another mistake was that Ehrenburg explained the fierce resistance of the fascists in the East by the fear of retribution for the atrocities committed on Soviet soil, thereby indirectly confirming the false reports of the "ruling fascist clique" about Russian atrocities. In fact, the transfer of German divisions from west to east is a provocation by Hitler, an attempt to sow distrust among the allies.

Not for the first time statements were heard from Moscow, such as "Hitlers come and go", but they did not have the expected influence on the Germans. Nothing, in fact, did not change and Alexandrov's article. All

remained as before, like an analysis of a sentence in an old joke: the Germans are the "subject to", the Red Army is the "proper", Germany is the "place of estate", and Ehrenburg, who, by the way, made a significant contribution to the victory on the ideological front, "just a pretext." Only the allies were wary: are the Russians trying to drag the Germans to their side? Yes, the journalist who made "erroneous conclusions", who did not understand the "provocative policy of the Hitlerites", was pretty frightened:

"I understood why Alexandrov's article appeared: it was necessary to try to break the resistance of the Germans by promising impunity to ordinary executors of Hitler's orders, it was also necessary to remind the allies that we value the cohesion of the coalition. I agreed with both of them - I wanted, like everyone else, that the last act of the tragedy would not bring unnecessary victims and that the near end of the war would become

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the real world. Something else grieved me: why were not my thoughts attributed to me, why was it necessary to condemn me in order to calm the Germans? Now that the bitterness of those days is long forgotten, I see that there was a logic to the calculation. Goebbels portrayed me as a fiend, and Alexandrov's article could be the right move in a chess game. My naivete was that I considered a person not a wooden pawn.

The quick-witted Ehrenburg turned to Stalin with a written question: should he stop his journalistic activity altogether, if this is required by the political line? Didn't receive an answer. Ilya Grigorievich will cease to be printed in February 1949 as part of the fight against cosmopolitans.

The military councils and political departments analyzed the readiness of the TROOPS FOR THE FEAT:

"Pros:

high morale of the troops;

the desire to quickly end the enemy, end the war;

great combat experience, skill.

Minuses:

ignorance of the peculiarities of Berlin itself and hence the complexity of the struggle in it;

the presence of hatred moods that can lead to unnecessary losses and delay pace;

the presence of factors such as drunkenness, hoarding, a perverted interpretation of revenge. This was of particular importance for Berlin, where there are many temptations, where the victorious feelings can run wild, but where 3 million people are concentrated, and it is easier for the enemy to organize them than in large areas;

the appearance of cases of evasion from combat, the desire to save Life.

On the night of April 16, tank armies squeezed into the bridgehead. At 2 o'clock, when everything secret became clear, and the battle flags were brought out in the trenches, the Military Council of the Front instructed the military councils of the 5th shock, 8th guards, 69th, 1st and 2nd guards tank armies to production and provision of first-echelon formations with red combat stee

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gami measuring 1.5 by 3 meters for hoisting over government buildings in Berlin. It is noteworthy that the 3rd shock army does not appear in the "instruction".

Perfectly aware of the significance of the historical mission entrusted to him and the magnitude of his personal responsibility, Georgy Konstantinovich made every effort to defeat, with one crushing blow, the 9th Army of General Busse that opposed him.

Zhukov was going to capture Berlin on the fifth day of the battle.

Marshal I.S. Konev decided to strike the main blow with the forces of the 3rd Guards, 13th and 5th Guards combined arms, 3rd and 4th Guards Tank Armies from the Tribel region to Stremberg. They were supposed to break through the enemy's defenses on the 27-kilometer section of the Forst, Muskau section, defeat his troops in the Cottbus area and south of Berlin. In the main direction, it was also planned to use the second echelon of the front - the 28th and 31st armies, which were supposed to arrive from East Prussia by April 20-22. In the directive to the troops dated April 8, the commander also laid down the possibility of "Demonstrating the initiative", separately indicating: "To keep in mind part of the forces of the right wing of the front to assist the troops of the First Belorussian Front in capturing the city of Berlin."

It was planned to deliver an auxiliary strike by the forces of the 2nd Army of the Polish Army together with the 1st Polish Tank Corps and the right flank of the 52nd Army in cooperation with the 7th Guards Mechanized Corps in the general direction of Dresden with the task of ensuring the actions of the strike groups from the south. The reserve of the front was the 1st Guards Cavalry Corps, which was intended for use in the 52nd Army zone.

Thus, excluding 18 divisions that were on the way, Konev allocated 37 rifle divisions, 1 cavalry, 4 mechanized, 6 tank corps, 2 tank and 3 self-propelled artillery brigades - 630 thousand people to participate in the Berlin operation. , 11 thousand guns and mortars, 2000 tanks and self-propelled guns, 2158 aircraft. Rest

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27 divisions and the 77th fortified area held the defense from Penzig to Krnov and fought for Breslau. The 60th Army of Kurochkin with the 31st Tank Corps were transferred to the 4th Ukrainian Front.

The tank armies were originally planned to enter a clear breakthrough on the second day, after the infantry formations had reached the left bank of the Spree. They were to develop a swift offensive in a northwestern direction, on the sixth day of the operation to capture the areas of Rathenow, Brandenburg, Dessau and create conditions for encircling the Berlin enemy grouping. However, later Konev changed his mind, or rather, remained true to his principles and "to speed up the penetration of the entire depth of the enemy's tactical defense" ordered the tankers "to cross the river. Neisse with infantry battle formations, and later overtake the infantry with forward brigades and, by the end of the first day of the operation, capture a bridgehead on the river. Spree, and the main forces to approach Kr. Spree. In addition, General Rybalko received an order to be ready "to attack Berlin from the south with a reinforced tank corps with a rifle division of the 3rd Guards Army", and General Gordov was directly instructed that after the capture of Cottbus, his army "attacks Berlin with its main forces from the south with one SC from the southwest.

Ivan Stepanovich was not going to miss his chance, carrying out semi-underground preparations for a throw to the north, of course, in the interests of a common cause: "The break in the dividing line near Lubben, as it were, hinted at the initiative nature of actions near Berlin. And how could it be otherwise. Advancing, in essence, along the southern outskirts of Berlin, knowingly leaving it untouched on the right flank, and even in a situation where it was not known in advance how everything would turn out in the future, seemed strange and incomprehensible. The decision to be ready for such a blow seemed clear, understandable and self-evident. Konev obviously decided, despite the directives of the Headquarters, to break into the "lair of the beast" first.

Each of the armies of the strike force received an artillery division of a breakthrough and a fighter-counter defense division.

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tank brigade. The artillery density was 270 guns and mortars per kilometer. Since the offensive began with crossing a water barrier, the total duration of the artillery preparation was planned to be 145 minutes.

The 2nd Air Army (21 air divisions and 4 separate regiments) was supposed to provide air cover for the concentration of strike force troops; assist the troops in forcing the Neisse and breaking through the enemy defenses to the full tactical depth with massed strikes; to help tank armies in the fastest crossing of the Spree river. Further, aviation was to prevent the approach of enemy reserves to the battlefield from the direction of Berlin and Dresden, and in the following days, to escort tank armies throughout the entire depth of their advance.

Since until the end of March tank armies were active on the left flank of the front, Konev had a real opportunity, having made a covert regrouping to a new direction, to achieve operational surprise. Castling was successfully carried out in the period from 8 to 14 April. Wooded areas contributed to the secrecy of movement and camouflage of troops. Models of military equipment and false radio stations were left in the areas of the former concentration. In addition, in order to mislead the enemy and blind his observation posts, the aviators were instructed to put up a smoke screen on almost the entire front line on the day of the breakthrough.

On the Neisse River, the troops of the 4th Panzer Army of General Fritz Gresser from the Army Group Center were defending. On the northern flank were the three infantry divisions of General Kurt Wager's 5th Army Corps. To the south were the positions of the Panzer Corps "Grossdeutschland", which included three infantry and Panzergrenadier divisions "Brandenburg". Behind them, on the line of the Spree, the reserve 21st Panzer Division was concentrated. The defense consisted of two continuous trenches of a full profile - the first directly along the banks of the Neisse, the second a kilometer to the west. In the depths, a number of strongholds adapted for all-round defense were prepared. Interfluve of Neisse and Beaver

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the front to the north was blocked by four infantry divisions of the 57th tank corps. The commander of the "Center" group, Ferdinand Schörner, who became a field marshal on April 5, thought in a military way and expected the main blow of the Soviet troops on Dresden in order to reach the Elbe, meet the Americans and split Germany in two. To counter this threat, he assembled strong mobile formations south of Górlitz - the 10th SS Panzer Division "Fruntsberg", the 1st Parachute-Panzer Division "Hermann Goering", the division "Escort of the Führer". To the north of Dresden was located the corps group "Moser". The fact that the Soviet offensive will take place in a completely different area and it will begin on April 10, the Germans learned from defectors. Nothing happened during the named period, however, Schörner transferred the division "Escort of the Führer" to the band of the 4th Panzer Army.

Thus, on the Neisse River it was really possible to resist the Soviet onslaught | | German divisions armed with 1200 guns and mortars, 380 tanks and self-propelled guns. Schörner had no opportunity to take anything from his right wing: on April 5, the armies of the 4th Ukrainian Front resumed their offensive against Moravská-Ostrava.

In the zone of the 1st Ukrainian Front on the night of April 16, reinforced rifle companies conducted reconnaissance in force. They captured five small bridgeheads on the western bank of the Neisse, from which they were soon successfully driven out by German counterattacks. As a result, it was established "that the enemy is stubbornly defending the lines he occupies and is not going to leave them."

Marshal K.K. Rokossovsky planned the main attack on the 45-kilometer section Altdamm - Schwedt with the forces of the 65th, 70th and 49th armies in the general direction of Nestrelitz. After breaking through the enemy defenses, each army was assigned a tank or mechanized corps. During the first five days, the formations of the shock group were supposed to force both channels

Oder and completely break through the Oder defensive line. With the introduction of mobile formations into battle, the troops of the front had to develop the offensive in

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northwestern and western directions and cut off the main forces of Hasso von Manteuffel's 3rd Panzer Army from Berlin. The 3rd Guards Cavalry Corps remained in the front reserve. The troops of the 19th and the main forces of the 2nd shock armies received the task of firmly holding the occupied lines. Part of Fedyuninsky's forces were planned to assist Batov's divisions in capturing the city of Stettin, and subsequently to develop an offensive on Forbein.

But first, the armies of Rokossovsky, who fought with the front to the east, had to turn 180 degrees, go through a forced march of 300-350 kilometers and change the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front at the line of the Oder.

The regrouping was carried out in the period from 4 to 17 April. In order to misinform the enemy, the concentration of three tank corps and two combined arms armies with a large number of crossing facilities on the right wing of the front was simulated.

Excluding the 19th and 5th Guards Tank Armies, which fought with the East Prussian army, the front included 33 rifle divisions, 1 cavalry division, [] mechanized and 3 tank corps, | tank and | self-propelled artillery brigade - 442 thousand people, 1360 aircraft.

The main forces of artillery were concentrated in the breakthrough areas, where the density reached over 230 guns and mortars per kilometer. Artillery acted according to the plans of the commanders, which was explained by different forcing conditions. The duration of artillery preparation was set at 45-60 minutes.

The most important task of the 4th Air Army (15 air divisions and 4 separate regiments) was to ensure the crossing of the Oder River. In addition, it was assigned to accompany the infantry offensive during the fighting in the depths of the enemy defenses, since the crossing of artillery could take a considerable time.

A serious natural obstacle lay on the path of the Soviet troops: "What we managed to see did not please us," Rokossovsky recalls the reconnaissance that took place on April 10. - Separating our positions and enemy positions

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It was a river, which in this area formed two wide channels - the Ost-Oder and the West-Oder. Between them is a floodplain, which at this time of the year was flooded. So in front of us lay a continuous strip of water five kilometers wide. The western, high bank was barely visible. If it were a river, it would be easier: it can be overcome by boats or ferries. But you can't swim across the floodplain on them: it's too shallow. Pavel Ivanovich said thoughtfully:

- Our soldiers have already given a definition, in my opinion, very accurate: "Two Dnieper, and in the middle of the Pripyat ...

The swampy floodplain flooded with water was practically impassable. But in some places, half-destroyed dams towered over it."

Along the western bank of the West Oder, the main defense line of the 3rd Panzer Army was equipped, consisting of two or three positions and reaching a depth of 10 kilometers. The second lane ran along the line of the Randov River, 20 kilometers from the Oder, the third - along the Ikker River.

In the north, on the islands of Wolin and Usedom, there were two infantry divisions that were part of the Swinemünde defensive area under the command of General Freilich. 90 km

The section of the front along the West Oder was occupied by three infantry divisions, two battle groups, several separate regiments and battalions of the 32nd Army Corps and the Oder Corps. The People's Artillery Corps, the 210th assault gun brigade, the 503rd heavy tank battalion were available as reinforcements - there were a total of 140 tanks and self-propelled guns. Most of the forces and means were located in the Stettin direction. The second line housed the 28th SS Infantry Division "Wallonia" and the 27th SS Infantry Division "Langemark".

On April 16-18, in the bands of the 65th and 49th armies, separate units on boats and improvised means, under the cover of artillery fire and smoke screens, crossed the eastern branch of the Oder and captured the dams: "This is how original bridgeheads were created among the flooded floodplain, where the troops were gradually transported".

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BREAKTHROUGH

On April 16, two hours before dawn, at 5 o'clock in the morning Moscow time, artillery preparation began in the 1st Belorussian Front on the signal "Motherland". Tank and self-propelled regiments took part in it, and in the zone of the 5th shock army, ships and floating batteries of the Dnieper flotilla. The force of the artillery fire was enormous: "There was a continuous rumble of volcanic power. It's no joke: they hit with a volley and continued to hit and hit forty thousand guns! It seemed that the whole Prioderskaya plain was shaking. Clouds of dust and smoke rose like a wall to the very sky. Golovanov's bombers struck at the second line of defense.

Under the final volley of rocket artillery, searchlights turned on, and with the support of tanks and self-propelled guns, the infantry of the 3rd and 5th shock, 8th guards and 69th armies moved behind the fire bar. At 6.15, the 1st Army of the Polish Army, the 47th and 33rd armies, which did not get searchlights, went on the offensive.

For the first hour and a half, the offensive developed successfully, the enemy almost did not fire. However, soon the Germans, relying on the second line of defense, put up fierce resistance.

Thus, the troops of the right-flank 47th Army (77th, 125th, 129th Rifle Corps), supported by 100 tanks and SAUK, broke through the first position of the 606th Special Purpose Division of Maximilian Roskopf at 11 o'clock. The Germans responded by moving out of the Vritsen area of the SS combat group "1001 nights", numbering about fifty self-propelled guns. The 25th tank-grenadier division of General Arnold Burmeister (84 armor units) advanced from the reserve to the place of the breakthrough. As a result, during the day the advance of the army of General F.I. Perkhovich was 4-6 kilometers.

The onslaught of the 3rd shock army (12th guards, 7th, 79th rifle corps), reinforced by the 9th tank corps of General I.F. Kirichenko, as well as seven separate tank and self-propelled regiments (333 tanks and self-propelled guns), was repulsed by the grenadiers of the 309th Berlin Infantry Division. Maximum

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new advance of the troops of General V.I. Kuznetsov did not exceed 8 kilometers.

Formations of the 5th Shock Army (26th Guards, 9th, 32nd Rifle Corps, 11th and 67th Heavy Guards, 220th Tank Brigades - 353 armored units, including 128 IS-2 tanks) opposed the regiment of the 309th infantry and two regiments of the 9th parachute divisions. Of particular benefit from the use of searchlights is the headquarters of General N.E. Berzarin did not feel:

"The searchlights were put into operation in a timely manner, but they did not give the expected effect. The reason for this was:

a) bad weather (haze);

6) after artillery preparation, the front line of the enemy was shrouded in a continuous cloud of smoke and dust, which the light of searchlights did not penetrate;

c) out of 26 searchlights, 12 did not work. Five searchlights were put out of action by enemy machine-gun fire at the very beginning of the battle, one turned out to be faulty, and the rest did not work due to the poor control of the officers of the searchlight regiment.

In this regard, instead of continuous illumination and blinding of the enemy, searchlights were weakly illuminated by individual lanes at a distance no further than to the front edge of the enemy.

The pace of advance slowed down sharply. In addition, in fact, the enemy was a serious obstacle was a dense network of canals that ran from north to south and numerous minefields.

Similarly, events developed in the zone of the 8th Guards Army (4th, 28th, 29th Guards Rifle Corps, 7th Heavy Tank Brigade, 8 tank and self-propelled regiments - 175 tanks and self-propelled guns), which attacked the positions of the 20th Panzergrenadier and 303rd Infantry Divisions, reinforced by units of the Müncheberg Panzer Division (35 tanks). General V.I. Chuikov got fifty spotlights, but even here he failed to "dazzle" anyone:

"I must say that at the time when we were admiring the strength and effectiveness of the searchlights on the range, none of us could accurately predict how it would look in a combat situation. It's hard for me to judge the situation on

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other sectors of the front. But in the zone of the 8th Guards Army, I saw how powerful beams of searchlights rested on a swirling curtain of burning, smoke and dust raised over enemy positions. Even searchlights could not penetrate this veil, and it was difficult for us to observe the battlefield. As a sin, the wind also blew towards me. As a result, Hill 81.5, where the command post was located, was soon shrouded in impenetrable darkness. Then we stopped seeing anything at all, relying in command and control only on radiotelephone communications and on messengers. (Vasily Ivanovich wrote this in his memoirs, and at the military scientific conference of 1946, among his colleagues, he spoke specifically about searchlights: "I believe that if they were placed in passive areas, they would be more useful there from the point of view vision of deception of the enemy... I consider it necessary to say that it was that the searchlight companies suffered losses, burned a lot of candles, but the troops did not receive real help from this").

For the first two kilometers, our rifle units and tanks advanced behind the barrage successfully, albeit slowly. And then, when streams and canals blocked the way, tanks and self-propelled guns began to lag behind the infantry. The interaction between artillery, infantry and tanks was broken. The barrage of fire, accurately timed, had to be stopped and the artillery switched to support the infantry and tanks by the method of successive concentration of fire. The surviving guns and mortars of the enemy came to life at dawn and began to shell the roads along which our troops and military equipment were densely marching. In some regiments and battalions, control was disrupted."

At noon, the Chuikovites ran into the Haupt Canal, where they were met with deadly fire from German batteries and tanks buried in the ground. I had to pull up artillery, re-establish interaction.

By 1300, Marshal Zhukov "clearly realized that the enemy's fire defense system had basically survived here, and in the battle formation in which we launched the attack and were advancing, we could not take the Seelow Heights." Unprecedented co

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The number of "trunks" thrashed in vain on the fortifications left by the Germans. Aviation, as we remember, hollowed out at the same positions that artillery was aimed at, and in small groups: due to unfavorable weather, massive attacks by attack aircraft and bombers

did not take place. In general, it suddenly turned out, according to General S.I. Bogdanov, "that the enemy's defense is completely different, that the defensive zone itself is much deeper." The command of Army Group Vistula noted with satisfaction: "Due to the location of the main battle line and the deep separation of our own artillery positions, the effect of enemy shelling cannot be compared with the high consumption of ammunition."

In order to intensify the blow and guarantee a path to Berlin, it was decided to put both tank armies into action.

In the afternoon, the 1st Guards Tank Army (11th Guards and 11th Tank Army, 8th Guards Mechanized Corps, 64th Guards Tank Brigade - 737 tanks and self-propelled guns) was introduced into the battle, receiving task to capture the Seelow Heights on the move. In fact, the tankers only managed to disorganize the regrouping started by Chuikov: "When the tank formations began to pass through the battle formations of the 8th Guards Army, it became even more crowded on the roads, and it was impossible to get off them. The tanks of the 1st Guards literally ran into our tractors, which were dragging artillery, as a result of which the maneuver of the second echelons of divisions and corps turned out to be constrained. I must say that the 8th Guards Army also had its own considerable tank forces ... We had a sufficient strike force, the mood to attack was strong." According to Vasily Ivanovich, on the first day, tank armies "not only did not bring any benefit, but, on the contrary, even harm."

By evening, Soviet troops crossed the Haupt Canal and lined up along the railway line at the foot of the Seelow Heights: "The slopes of the Seelow Heights were so steep that our tanks and self-propelled guns could not climb them and were forced to look for more gentle slopes. These climbs went along the roads to Seelow, Friedersdorf and Dolgeln. But

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here the enemy has created strong strongholds of defense. The 57th Guards Rifle Division started a battle for the Zeelov station. Katukov's tankers were unable to advance beyond the positions already occupied by the infantry: "When we reached the Seelow Heights, turned around and rushed forward, all our attempts were unsuccessful. Everyone who leaned forward instantly burned, because a whole artillery corps of the enemy stood on the heights, and the German defense was not broken.

General S.I. Bogdanov, who commanded the 2nd Guards Tank Army (9th and 12th Guards Tank, 1st Mechanized Corps - 685 tanks and self-propelled guns), received an order to overtake the infantry battle formations and strike at Bernau. By 19 o'clock the tankers reached the line of the advanced units of the 3rd and 5th shock armies, but, having met fierce resistance from the enemy, they stopped. By the end of the day, Berzarin's army reached the line of the Alte-Oder River.

In the direction of auxiliary strikes, it was possible to cover 5-7 kilometers. The head of the political department of the 69th army reported to the political department of the front:

"According to many wounded, the artillery fire, concentrated on the second and third trenches, was well-aimed, but did not inflict heavy losses on the enemy, due to the fact that the latter had withdrawn his infantry to the depth of defense in advance.

"The corpses of the Germans," say the wounded, "we saw very few in the 2nd and 3rd trenches."

Commander of the pulverization of the 1st battalion, 1079th joint venture, 312th division, ml.

Lieutenant Butylkin stated: "Artillery preparation was carried out in an empty place, because the enemy had moved his firing points..."

The wounded spoke inconsistently about the operation and effectiveness of searchlights during the attack and battle in the depths of the enemy's defenses.

Some (most) claim that the light of searchlights blinded the enemy, illuminating the area ahead, which made it possible to move forward and relatively quickly take possession of three enemy trenches.

Particularly well respond to the actions of searchlights

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tankers and self-propelled gunners who, using light, moved with their tanks and self-propelled guns in night battle conditions not blindly.

Another group of the wounded negatively assesses the actions and use of searchlights, which did not give a great forward visibility, due to the presence of large smoke and dust after artillery preparation, as well as pre-morning fog, which limited visibility.

Some of the wounded stated that it was the searchlight that made it possible for the enemy to concentrate his fire on the places where our troops were concentrated, which explains such heavy losses ...

There were complaints from the personnel about the actions of our fighter aviation. On April 16, in the morning and afternoon, enemy aircraft, especially Messerschmitts, often appeared over the battlefield, inflicted many losses on our troops and did not encounter much resistance from our fighter aircraft ...

Soldiers and officers who were wounded in their minefields express great dissatisfaction with the actions of sappers, especially in front of the 247th Rifle Division, who poorly cleared minefields, as a result of which there were cases of explosions of people, tanks and self-propelled guns on their mines. The analysis shows that most of the wounds did not occur in the minefields of the enemy, but ours.

Some sapper units did not work enough. The passages were made narrow, and they were not completely cleared of mines. Things were especially bad with this in 247 sd. Divisional engineer lieutenant colonel Lomov, member. VKISb), and the commander of the 416th OSB division, Major Lebedev, member. The All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, instead of organizing demining work, on the eve of the offensive, started drinking. Lieutenant Colonel Lomov was so drunk that he could not come to the division commander on his call.

At the headquarters of the 33rd Army, General V.D. Tsvetaeva came to the conclusion: <“The loss carried out along the entire front by our troops on the night of 15.4.45. reconnaissance in force, the enemy, having made for himself the correct conclusion about our impending offensive, during

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On April 15, 1945 and in the first half of the night from April 15 to April 16, he changed a significant part of the firing positions of artillery and thereby removed his artillery weapons from under the fire of our artillery and thus retained the possibility during our attack to fall with strong artillery fire on the battle formations of the advancing units of our army, as a result of which the rate of attack was sharply reduced and our infantry suffered significant losses from enemy artillery fire.

A report from the headquarters of the Vistula Army Group noted: “Due to the location of the main battle line and the deep separation of our own artillery positions, the effect of enemy shelling cannot be compared with the high consumption of ammunition.”

The results of the first day of the offensive did not inspire optimism. The troops of the 1st Belorussian Front only touched the enemy's second line of defense. Taking into account reconnaissance in force, on April 14-16, the front lost about 10 thousand people killed and wounded, 310 tanks and self-propelled guns.

In the evening, a telephone conversation took place between the Supreme Commander-in-Chief and the front commander:

"This time I.V. Stalin spoke to me not as calmly as during the day.

— You should not have brought the 1st Guards Tank Army into action in the sector of the 8th Guards Army, and not where the Stavka demanded. - Then he added:

- Do you have confidence that tomorrow you will take the Seelow line?

Trying to be calm, I answered:

- Tomorrow, April 17, by the end of the day, the defense on the Zeelovsky line will be broken through. I believe that the more the enemy throws his troops towards our troops here, the faster we will take Berlin, since it is easier to defeat enemy troops in an open field than in a city.

Twenty years later, recalling and reflecting on the vicissitudes of the Berlin operation during sleepless retirement nights, Georgy Konstantinovich came to the CONCLUSION time after time:

"There were no mistakes. However, it must be recognized that we

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a mistake was made, which dragged out the battle when breaking through the tactical zone by one or two day.

In preparing the operation, we somewhat underestimated the complexity of the nature of the terrain in the area of the Seelow Heights, where the enemy had the opportunity to organize a defense that was difficult to overcome. Being 10-12 kilometers from our initial lines, having dug deep into the ground, especially behind the reverse slopes of the heights, the enemy was able to save his forces and equipment from the fire of our artillery and air bombing. True, we had extremely limited time to prepare for the Berlin operation. The blame for the shortcomings of the issue, first of all, I must take upon myself.

I think that, if not publicly, but in private reflection, the responsibility for the insufficient readiness to take the Seelow Heights on an army scale will also be assumed by the corresponding army commanders. When planning an artillery offensive, one should have foreseen the difficulties of destroying the enemy defenses in this area.

Once again, the great commander was let down by the Germans, who dug in deep, the terrain, which turned out to be too difficult, and the stupid subordinates who did not foresee something there. Once again, it was confirmed that the shortest path does not mean the fastest, but "the introduction of tank armies into the enemy's tactical defense zone is rarely expedient and always undesirable."

Zhukovsky's idea in all its ingenious simplicity was revealed to the general army by K.F. Telegin:

"The idea of the operation was this. Berlin is the ultimate strategic goal. It is necessary to make a frontal breakthrough of the defense in the shortest direction, covering Berlin from the north and south, surround it and destroy the garrison if it resists. 6-8 days...

We knew that it would be almost impossible to carry out the withdrawal of tank troops to the operational space. It was decided to bring in all tank troops in order to crush the enemy with a mass of equipment, destroy the maximum of his forces and means, demoralize him, and thereby facilitate the task of taking Berlin.

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It was quite clear that the enemy on the outskirts would fight sparing no effort. If we had waited for the infantry to break through the defenses and create conditions for bringing tanks into the breach, then we would have to wait for this until we reached the Elbe.

Yes, we reckoned with the fact that we would have to suffer losses in tanks, but we knew that even if we lost half, we would still bring up to 2 thousand armored units into Berlin, and this would be enough to take it. Berlin was the ultimate strategic goal of the operations of the Red Army in the Great Patriotic War, and the exit to the Elbe already pursued the goal of capturing the space previously discussed at the Yalta Conference. All this was fully justified by the course of the operation. Our losses were great. But their result is obvious ...

All these documents proceeded from one and only thought, from one and only goal, which the commander set himself, putting it into practice - not to hesitate, not to linger, to look for a weak point. But if this weak point is not there, then they will lean on them with a mass of equipment, with pressure. Let it cost us casualties and losses, but we must rush to Berlin as quickly as possible. The faster we break out there, the weaker the enemy will be there, the closer the victory. In addition, we will forestall a possible Allied landing, we will forestall them in capturing Berlin."

Marshal A.Kh. Babadzhanyan recalls that during a meeting at the front headquarters, General Bogdanov "persistently argued to Zhukov that more freedom should be given to his army for a deeper bypass of Berlin from the north." The marshal then pulled back the commander: "Are you going to fight for Berlin, Comrade Bogdanov, or will you always go north?"

"I remember that back at the meeting on April 5, some of our generals persistently argued to the front commander that the enemy's main line of defense was not the first, but the second, passing through the Seelow Heights, that artillery fire should be concentrated not on the first, but on the second line. and aviation. However, their opinion was not taken into account.

Finally, about the fact that Zhukov from the very beginning planned "Entirely justified" to introduce tank armies in four

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city with a population of one million, testifies Marshal of the Armored Forces S.I. Bogdanov:

"All instructions of the Military Council of the Front and Marshal of the Soviet Union comrade. Zhukov 2nd Guards TA made it happen. We painted in advance, while still on the eastern bank of the river. Oder, which streets of Berlin we will go. Assault detachments were formed in advance, their chiefs were appointed, on a large plan and a box of sand, all measures were worked out several times, and regiment commanders, battalion commanders as the main performers who would have to storm Berlin, in tens of days already quite clearly imagined what they would do.

The true strategist was Georgy Konstantinovich! And how he loved and protected the soldiers! About it entire volumes have been written.

On the afternoon of April 16, Hitler signed an appeal to the soldiers of the Eastern Front:

"The Jewish-Bolshevik mortal enemy went on the offensive with all the main forces. He is trying to ruin Germany and exterminate our people. You know from your own experience what fate awaits our women and children. Old men, men and children are shot, and young women and girls are turned into barracks prostitutes. The rest go to Siberia.

We foresaw this blow and since January of this year we have been taking all the necessary measures to create a stable front. Our powerful artillery will meet the enemy. The losses suffered by the infantry formations have been completely restored by means of new formations. Front

also reinforced by mobile units and Volkssturm. The old fate of Asia awaits the Bolsheviks: they will bleed to death in the mouths of the capital of the Third Reich.

Whoever does not fulfill his duty at the moment is acting as a traitor to our people. Regiments and divisions leaving their positions should burn with shame in front of women and children who endure the bombing terror...

Pay special attention to those few officers and soldiers who, to save their despicable lives, are fighting for

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tiv us, even in German uniforms. Those persons who will give orders to retreat and whom you do not know well, are subject to detention and, if necessary, must be shot on the spot, regardless of their rank ...

Berlin will remain German. Vienna will be German again, and Europe will never become Bolshevik...

At this hour, the entire German people is looking at you, warriors of the Eastern Front, in the hope that with your endurance, stubbornness and fanaticism, skillful use of weapons and initiative, you will arrange a bloodbath for the Bolsheviks.

At this moment, when fate has taken into its hands the greatest war criminal of all times and peoples, a turning point in the war is taking place.

The night of April 17 was used by Soviet troops to move artillery and regroup troops. The offensive resumed at 10.30. Artillery preparation carried out during daylight hours proved to be much more effective. But aviation was practically inactive.

The 1st mechanized corps of General S.M. Krivoshein, who, together with infantry units, broke through the defenses of the 9th parachute division of General Breuer in the Guzov area. The advance detachment of the corps turned north and, passing through the German rear, captured Platkov with a bridge over the Alte Oder. General Bogdanov immediately began the transfer of the 12th Guards Tank Corps to the area of the emerging breakthrough. Using the success of the tankers, the troops of the 5th shock army by the evening covered 8-14 kilometers.

The armies of Katukov and Chuikov tried to break through the Seelow-Müncheberg highway. However, on both sides of the road, four enemy anti-aircraft regiments, numbering almost 200 guns, occupied positions. The gap appeared only on the right flank, where the 11th tank corps of I.I. Yushchuk bypassed the Seelow Heights from the north. By the end of the day, Katukov, leaving two tank brigades, said to Chuikov: "I have gone" and deployed his main forces in a promising direction. The 8th Guards Army continued to push through Zeelov

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heights, repulsing counterattacks of the tank-grenadier division "Kurmark" (59 tanks and self-propelled guns).

The 47th and 3rd shock armies advanced another 4-8 kilometers and were stopped by a counterattack by the 25th tank-grenadier division.

On the right wing of the front, the troops of the 61st Army (9th Guards, 80th, 89th Rifle Corps), which launched an offensive on April 17, crossed the Oder by the end of the day and captured a small bridgehead on the left bank, to expand which did not allow the 5th Jaeger Division of Friedrich Sixt. By this time, formations of the 1st Army of the Polish Army crossed the Oder and Alte Oder and broke through the first position of the main line of defense.

North and south of Frankfurt, the troops of the 69th and 33rd armies advanced from 2 to 6 kilometers.

To mend a hole in the positions of the 9th Parachute Division, the German command decided to use the reserve 18th Panzergrenadier Division (54 tanks and self-propelled guns). In addition, the 11th SS Panzergrenadier Division "Nordland", the 23rd SS Panzergrenadier Division "Netherlands" and the 503rd SS Heavy Tank Battalion (all together - 48 tanks and self-propelled guns).

The armies of the 1st Belorussian Front lost another 11,000 men and 180 armored vehicles killed and wounded. Comrade Stalin could not be satisfied with either the pace of the offensive or the rate of expenditure of forces and resources. In the evening [April 7] he allowed Marshal Konev to turn the tank armies to Berlin. Marshal Zhukov received a directive from the Stavka "On the need to speed up the capture of Berlin," which stated: "Hitler is weaving a web in the Berlin area to cause disagreements between the Russians and the allies. This web must be cut by the capture of Berlin by the Soviet troops. We can do it and we must do it. Slash the Germans without mercy, and soon you will be in Berlin." In the morning, another directive No. 11071 flew to Marshal Rokossovsky: the troops of the 2nd Belorussian Front, after forcing the Oder, should not later than April 22

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the main forces to develop an offensive to the southwest, striking around Berlin from the north.

The imagination of the Supreme was haunted by a nightmarish picture - the American airborne assault in Berlin and the star-striped flags over the Reichstag.

Zhukov, in turn, urged on, demanded, arranged dressing down. Accusations of slowness, cowardice and stupidity rained down on commanders of all ranks.

"1. Worst of all are carrying out the offensive Berlin operation of the 69th Army under the command of Colonel General Kolpakchi, [TA under the command of Colonel General Katukov and 2 TA under the command of Colonel General Bogdanov.

These armies, having colossal forces and means, act ineptly and indecisively for the second day, trampling before a weak enemy.

Commander Katukov and his corps commanders Yushchuk, Dremov, Babadzhanyan do not observe the battlefield and the action of their troops, sitting far in the rear (10-12 km). These generals do not know the situation and are trailing at the tail of events.

2. If we allow slowness in the development of the Berlin operation, then the troops will be exhausted, they will use up all their material reserves without taking Berlin.

I demand:

A) Immediately develop the swiftness of the offensive. [The 1st and 2nd tank armies and 9th break through with the support of the 3rd, 5th and 8th guards. armies to the rear of the enemy's defenses and rapidly advance into the Berlin area.

Bypass all large settlements and road junctions, keeping in mind that in these places the enemy will have a strong anti-tank defense. Tank armies should not be scattered along the front and act with their fists.

B) All commanders should be on the NP of corps commanders fighting in the main direction.

I categorically forbid being in the rear of the troops.

C) Pull up all artillery, including heavy artillery, to the first echelon and keep it no further than 2-3 km behind the echelon conducting the battle. Artillery actions should be concentrated on those sectors where the breakthrough task is being solved.

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3. Keep in mind that until Berlin itself, the enemy will resist and cling to every house and bush, and therefore tankers, self-propelled gunners and infantry will not have to wait until the artillery kills all the Nazis and gives them the pleasure of moving through the clear space.

4. Beat the enemy mercilessly and move forward day and night to Berlin, then Berlin will be ours very soon.

Closer to the night, the frustrated marshal forbade "until special order" to issue vodka to the tankers.

Nov 18 April no quick breakthrough. The main strike force of the 1st Belorussian Front stumbled upon the enemy's reserves. The gap between the 101st Army Corps and the 56th Tank Corps was closed by the 18th Panzergrenadier Division, and the SS Division Nordland stood between the 56th Corps and the 11th SS Corps. The latter was supposed to launch a counterattack in the southeast direction, but could not do this due to the lack of gasoline. The SS division "Netherlands" took up defensive positions along the northern edge of the Seelow Heights.

The 1st Guards Tank Army, together with Chuikov's infantry, continued to slowly gnaw through the German defenses on the outskirts of Müncheberg, skirting the Seelow Heights from the north. At the same time, tankers were repeatedly covered with fire by their own artillery. The 44th Guards Tank Brigade was especially hard hit. By the end of the day, the 8th Guards Mechanized Corps was occupied by Marksdorf. The 2nd Guards Tank Army, bypassing the positions of the Nordland, entered the zone of the 3rd Guards Army, captured Rigenwalde and concentrated in the Batslov-Ilov area. General Bogdanov, instead of hitting the German defense with his forehead, maneuvered and still "went north." The divisions of General Kuznetsov crossed the Frilandenstrom canal, occupied Kunersdorf and, advancing 5-6 kilometers in a day, completely overcame the main line of defense. The troops of the 47th Army drove the enemy garrison out of Vritsen by midnight.

69th Army (25th, 61st, 91st Rifle Corps) of General V.Ya. Kolpakchi practically did not budge. Nevertheless, the Germans decided to evacuate the garrison from the eastern part of Frankfurt. On the right flank

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that 61st Army of General P.A. Belova continued to expand the bridgehead.

The Germans again managed to hold the front. However, the commander of the 101st Corps, General Berlin, was removed and replaced by General Sixt. At the same time, General Helmut Weidling, who commanded the 56th Panzer Corps, dismissed the commander of the 9th Parachute Division.

In the evening, Zhukov continued the distribution of "elephants". The commanders were gifted with an order to improve the organization of the offensive: "1. Your offensive against Berlin is developing unacceptably slowly. If the operation continues like this, the offensive may bog down. 2. The main reason for the poor offensive lies in the lack of organization, the lack of interaction between the troops and the lack of exactingness towards persons who are not performing combat missions...". Commander of the 9th Guards Tank Corps Major General N.D. Vedeneev got a reprimand from the commander "for bad actions", the commander of the 11th tank corps, Major General I.I. Yushchuk - a warning about incomplete service compliance.

Only on April 19 did a turning point appear in the battle. In the morning, the front commander issued a directive that radically changed the direction of the offensive. The 47th, 3rd and 5th shock armies were to turn to the southwest and advance directly on Berlin. On this day

troops of the 2nd Guards Tank Army took Baplov and Ilov, and the 1st mechanized corps wedged to a depth of 30 kilometers. The divisions of the 3rd Shock Army followed, suppressing resistance centers that were bypassed by moving units. Rifle formations of Berzarin, with the support of the 12th Guards Tank Corps, shot down the enemy from the line east of Rigenwalde and, developing an offensive against Grunov, traveled 10 kilometers. Katukov's tankers and Chuikov's infantrymen captured Müncheberg and Schönfelde, and already at night Colonel Babadzhanyan's 11th Guards Tank Corps reached the Leknitz River.

And then, according to Katukov's story, Marshal Golovanov's bomb carriers flew in, with which the ground troops had neither communication nor identification marks:

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"On the issue of interaction between tanks and aviation, I must respond positively to the actions of General Krupsky's assault aviation corps. He worked with us many times. We worked with him and understood each other well. We had been working on organizing interaction with this formation before, and not only before the Berlin operation, and therefore we did not have any incidents. We had a complete agreement with the airlines that worked with us during one operation and then automatically switched to another. The exchange of radio data helped us a lot, as a result of which the tank could "talk" to the aircraft on the battlefield. The tank of a battalion or company commander could "tune in" to a wave of assault aircraft. There were cases when the planes had a clear intention to bomb the area where our units were located, but, being promptly redirected by tank commanders, corrected their mistake. But it was very bad for us when we were with Comrade. Chuikov, having mastered Müncheberg, rushed into the forests and went with a jerk to the inter-lake space. Night fell, and then the nightmare began: waves of our bombers were coming and unloading their cargo on my headquarters, on the columns and on the battle formations of the 8th Guards. mki 1 | guards maybe, they burn our tanks and vehicles, they kill people. Because of this, WE stopped the offensive for 4 hours, which developed very successfully.

When I reported this to Marshal Zhukov, the latter became worried, began to call Novikov and Golovanov, and instead of finding out the true state of affairs, they began to deny: "It's not mine, I don't know anything," etc. e. And so tired of these nightlights my commanders of the corps of owls, that they took and fired at them. As a result, the Boston plane was shot down, of course, ours. And only when irrefutable evidence was delivered, they believed us that they had bombed their planes. In the meantime, we argued that my headquarters is on fire, the windows fly out. The car caught fire, shells burst in my armored personnel carrier...

Something needs to be established, because, comrades, in just one night, 40 cars, 7 tanks were burned by their planes and over 60 people were killed.

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The left-flank 129th Rifle Corps of the 47th Army advanced 12 kilometers that day. The enemy's third line of defense was breached. The Germans abandoned the eastern part of Frankfurt and blew up the bridge over the Oder.

The main forces of the 1st Belorussian Front were divided into two strike groups. The 47th, 3rd shock and 2nd guards tank armies rushed to Berlin from the northeast. The 5th shock, 8th guards and 1st guards tank armies were moving towards the German capital along the Reichsstrasse No. 1. Weidling's 56th Panzer Corps continued to hold out between them.

On April 20, using the success of the tankers, the troops of General Perkhovich advanced another 15-20 kilometers and, together with the 1st mechanized corps, started fighting for Bernau. According to the chief of staff of the front, General V.D. Sokolovsky, "precisely 2 Guards. TA, with its quick attack on Bernau and Nauen, created a favorable environment for the attack of the 3rd beat. and 47th armies. By this I do not want to say that the 3rd beat. the army, as someone here put it, was marching somewhere in the rear. I just want to say that the avalanche of tanks of the 2nd Guards. TA quickly moved forward, crushed everything in front of it, and the infantry, using the success of the tankers, managed to keep up with the tanks, literally advancing at a run.

The divisions of General Kuznetsov, having fought through the Pretzeler Forst forest, captured the Verneichen road junction. The 5th Shock Army with the 12th Guards Tank Corps and the 8th Guards Army finished off Weidling's 56th Tank Corps in the area of Strausberg, Damsdorf and Müncheberg. To the south, Babadzhanian's tank brigades crossed Leknitz and overcame the inter-lake defile.

The 61st Army and the 1st Army of the Polish Army slowly but surely moved forward, gradually turning their front to the north, covering the main shock grouping of the front. In the southern wing, pursuing the retreating enemy, the 69th Army of Kolpakchi performed a similar function.

In the evening, General Bogdanov received a combat order from the front commander:

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"The 2nd Guards Tank Army is entrusted with a historic task: to be the first to break into Berlin and hoist the Banner of Victory. I personally instruct you to organize the execution.

Send one of the best brigades from each corps to Berlin and set them the task of breaking through to the outskirts of Berlin at any cost and reporting to Comrade Stalin and the announcements in the press no later than 4 am on April 21, 1945."

The same order, word for word, was given to General Katukov.

As Sokolovsky put it, "the front needed to hurry, hurry and hurry," and Marshal Zhukov stubbornly pushed the tank armies into the streets of the metropolis. The reason for the haste was publicly voiced by General Telegin in 1946, when the allies in the anti-Hitler coalition again became an "imperialist encirclement":

"We have been informed that the Allies are vigorously preparing to attack Berlin using airborne assault forces. Subsequently, in conversations, this was confirmed by the commander of the 82nd airborne division, stating that they were almost ready to land and our swift advance was a surprise to them. They believed that after the Pomeranian operation, the troops of our front | May not be able to start the operation on Berlin. You understand, comrades, what the capture of Berlin by us would mean under these conditions. It was a matter of honor for the troops of the Red Army, and in particular troops | | BF. We were closer to him than the allies. We have been going to him for almost four whole years, and it would, of course, be unforgivable before history, before the people, if we allowed the Allies to enter Berlin first.

During the breakthrough, the 1st Belorussian Front lost more than 1,000 armored vehicles, half of them burnt out. Babadzhanian writes: "The First Guards Tank Army suffered significant losses in the very first days of the Berlin operation. The idea that the introduction of tank armies in the enemy's tactical defense zone is rarely expedient and always undesirable was once again confirmed ...

"Armo rose to the rank of marshal, but did not understand that" in those conditions "

use of tank

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armies was "not only expedient, but also historically justified."

On April 20, Soviet long-range guns opened fire on Berlin.

Artillery and aviation preparation began in the offensive zone of the 1st Ukrainian Front [April 6 at 06.15. Under its cover, reinforced battalions advanced to the river, dragging boats and assault bridges behind them. Forty minutes later, when the fire was transferred to the depths of the German defense, they, under the cover of smoke, began to cross. After the head companies captured the bridgeheads, the sappers began building bridges, along which the crossing of the main forces began: "Floating light pontoon bridges were built in fifty minutes.

Bridges for thirty-ton cargo - in two hours, and for sixty-ton cargo - in four to five hours. The latter could miss tanks of all types. Part of the field artillery was dragged ford on ropes simultaneously with the crossing of the advanced battalions. Sappers worked for hours in icy water. The first echelons overcame the water barrier and advanced to the initial lines of attack within one hour, under the continuous roar of cannonade.

At 8.40 the troops began to break through the main defensive zone. In order to speed up the process, the front commander immediately put advanced tank brigades into action.

3rd Guards Army General V.N. Gordov (21, 76, 120th rifle corps) with the support of the 25th tank corps of General E.I. Fominykh attacked the city of Forst, which was defended by a regiment of the 342nd Infantry Division, while simultaneously bypassing it from the south. In the afternoon, the 6th Guards Tank Corps of the Rybalko army entered the battle on the left flank.

The 13th Army of General N.P. Pukhov (24th, 27th, 102nd Rifle Corps) had a ram in the form of the 7th Guards Tank Corps of the 3rd Tank Army on its right flank, and the 10th Guards Tank Corps of the 4th Tank Army on its left flank.

In the band of the 5th Guards Army, General A.S. Zhadova (32,

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34th, 34th Guards Rifle Corps, 150th Tank Brigade, 3rd and 17th Breakthrough Artillery Divisions, 3rd Guards Mortar Division), which rammed the defenses of the 545th People's Grenadier Division, the 4th Guards tank corps of General P.P. Poluboyarova.

The 7th, 6th, 5th Guards Mechanized Corps most of the time overcame traffic jams and crossings on the Neisse.

Germans - two infantry divisions! — held firm.

By the end of the day, the strike force of the front advanced into the depths of the enemy defense from 10 to 12 kilometers. The task of the day was not completed, they did not reach the Spree.

General Greser moved the 21st Panzer Division and the Fuhrer Escort Division to the line of the Forst-Weiswasser railway. The commander of the 10th SS Panzer Division, Brigadeführer Heinz Harmel, was ordered to move north on his own and take up defense along the highway between Cottbus and Stremberg.

On April 17, tank armies entered the battle in full force. To ensure their actions, most of the forces of the 2nd Air Army were involved. Still, the offensive developed slowly. The German 21st Panzer Division (107 tanks and self-propelled guns) hit the southern flank of the 3rd Guards and 3rd Guards Tank Armies (668 tanks and self-propelled guns). According to the report:

"Especially hot battle broke out on the morning of 17.4 in the Gari area, where the 54th Guards Tank Brigade beat off the counterattack of the tanks of the enemy's 21st Tank Division, supported by artillery and mortar fire. The enemy brought in up to 30 tanks for this counterattack, some of them of the Tiger type. As a result of a fierce tank battle, the brigade destroyed 15 enemy tanks, not counting the wrecked ones. At the same time, the brigade also suffered significant losses - 12 tanks knocked out and burned out.

Losses could have been more significant if the Germans really had at least a couple of "tigers". The main forces of the SS division "Fruntsberg" (120 tanks and self-propelled guns, including 10 captured "Shermans") at that time concentrated in the area of Spremberg and froze in anticipation of fuel. Advice

Russian troops repulsed all counterattacks and completed the breakthrough of the second line of defense in the interfluvium of the Neisse and Spree. In two days, the strike force advanced 15-20 kilometers.

"It is impossible to imagine these military operations as frontal ones," writes Konev, "when success is achieved consistently, from line to line. In conditions of rapid maneuver, the troops did not advance shoulder to shoulder everywhere, and sometimes with large gaps. Therefore, between the first and second lines of enemy defense, between the second and third, fierce battles took place both with the retreating and with the German units trying to counterattack us. The complexity and intricacy of this situation was aggravated by the fact that the fighting took place in a wooded area where fires continued to rage...

The combat enthusiasm among the troops was exceptionally high. Soldiers and officers had to endure incredible hardships. But the strength of people was literally doubled by the realization that as a result of this, the last, enormous physical and moral stress, we can finally achieve complete victory over the enemy. People had a strong belief that this time we will put an end to it.

In the direction of Dresden, the 2nd Army of the Polish Army under the command of General K.K. Sverchevsky and the 52nd Army of General K.A. Koroteev (48th, 73rd, 78th rifle corps), after the introduction of the 1st Polish tank and 7th guards mechanized corps, completed the breakthrough of the tactical defense zone.

In the evening, the front commander had a conversation with Stalin, at the end of which the Supreme Commander said that Zhukov's "things were difficult" and gave the "go-ahead" for the implementation of the "broken procurement." According to Konev's free retelling:

"I specified the direction in which the tank armies would be turned, and named Zossen as a landmark, a town twenty-five kilometers south of Berlin, known to us as the location of the headquarters of the German fascist General Staff.

What map are you reporting on? Stalin asked.

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- Two hundred thousand.

After a short pause, during which he apparently searched the map for Zossen, Stalin replied:

- Very good. Do you know that the headquarters of the Hitlerite General Staff is in Zossen?

- Yes I know.

"Very well," he repeated. - I agree. Turn the tank armies to Berlin."

As soon as he hung up, Konev phoned Rybalko and Lelyushenko and ordered the tanks to turn towards Berlin. Three hours later, the commanders received a directive:

"In pursuance of the order of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, I order:

Commander of the 3rd Guards. GA

1. During the night from April 17 to April 18, cross the river. Spree and develop a rapid offensive in the general direction of Vetschau, Golsen, Barut, Teltow, the southern outskirts of Berlin. The task of the army on the night of April 20-21, 1945. - break into Berlin from the south.

2. Commander of the 4th Guards. GA

During the night from 17 to 16 April, cross the river. Spree north of Spremberg and develop a rapid offensive in the general direction of Drebbau, Kalau, Dahme, Luckenwalde. Task

armies by the end of April 20 to capture the area of Belitz, Troyenbritzen, Luckenwalde. On the night of 20 to 21 April 1945 seize Potsdam and the southwestern part of Berlin.

It's funny that later, when summing up the results of the operation, General Rybalko was very annoyed: "Intelligence worked poorly for us. We did not even know that the headquarters of the German General Staff was located in Zossen. We learned about Zossen from correspondents".

For some unknown reason, the front commander did not share his "knowledge" with subordinates.

On April 18, the 3rd and 4th Guards Tank Armies, "acting along dead forest roads", reached the Spree where "where the enemy least expected", who did not have enough strength to block the entire threatened area. Together with the 13th Army, the tankers crossed the river ford, broke through the third

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defensive line and captured a bridgehead north of Spremberg. True, all this was done only by the dawn of the 19th, behind schedule. Troops of the 5th Guards Army with the 4th Guards Tank Corps crossed the Spree south of the city. Between the armies of Pukhov and Zhadov, in a semi-encirclement, there was a battered grouping as part of the 344th Infantry Division, the divisions "Frundsberg" and "Escort of the Fuhrer". The 3rd Guards Army, after stubborn street fighting, cleared Forst of the enemy and "hooked" on Cottbus.

Thus, in three days the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front advanced 30 kilometers in the direction of the main attack. Tank armies entered the operational space.

On the morning of April 19, Rybalko's tankers, pushing back the 21st Panzer Division, rushed to Berlin. By evening, they advanced 35 kilometers in a northwesterly direction, occupied Calau and Fetschau. Lelyushenko advanced even more rapidly and by evening had advanced 50 kilometers. The 5th Army Corps of the 4th German Army was finally cut off from the main forces and, together with the 21st Panzer Division, was reassigned to the headquarters of the 9th Army. General Busse immediately ordered Wager's corps to leave their positions on the Neisse and turn around on the Lübben-Halbe line with the front to the west. The offensive did not stop at night.

The next day, without encountering serious resistance, the corps of the 3rd Guards Tank Army traveled another 45-60 kilometers along two highways, slipped through Lubbenau, Luckau, Golsen, Barut, Kummersdorf and reached the approaches to Berlin. He was 30 kilometers away. Rybalko's losses were moderate - 839 people were killed and wounded, 72 armored vehicles burned down; 49 thousand personnel, 562 tanks and self-propelled guns remained in service. The right flank and communications of the army were covered by the 16th self-propelled artillery brigade. On the left, the 4th Guards Tank Army captured Dahme and started fighting for Luckenwalde and Jüterborg. The 3rd Guards Army fought stubborn battles with the Cottbus grouping of the enemy. The 13th Army moved westward up to 30 kilometers in two corps.

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The 5th Guards Army, having introduced the 33rd Guards Rifle Corps from the second echelon, after thirty minutes of artillery preparation, in which more than 1,100 guns and about 150 rocket launchers took part, captured Spremberg and surrounded a group of up to 5,000 people in the forests west of the city. Nevertheless, the front commander was dissatisfied with the actions of the guardsmen and slapped General N.F. Lebedenko immediately two disciplinary

penalties:

"Recently, the 33rd Corps under your command has been systematically disrupting the execution of combat orders. The meaning of the battle order is lost. There is no exactingness to the troops in the execution of combat orders in the corps. The fight is poorly organized. The forces of the enemy are overestimated, while their own are underestimated. All this leads to indecision in the actions of the troops.

and to marking time in front of a weak opponent. The troops are not accustomed to forest combat, and an insignificant forest area for the troops of the corps is an obstacle. Poor maneuvering of troops on the battlefield.

For non-compliance with combat orders by parts of the corps, unstable control of the corps in battle and indecision, I reprimand you and warn you about incomplete service compliance. I warn you, comrade Lebedenko, that if you do not draw conclusions for yourself and do not reorganize, I will be forced to remove you from your post."

By the end of April 20, the rapid advance of the tank armies had led to the cutting off of the Vistula Army Group from the Center Army Group. However, Konev was dissatisfied, especially with the actions of the 3rd Guards Tank Army, which slowed down its run in a wooded and swampy area south of Berlin, and kicked General Rybalko:

"Again you are moving with your gut. One brigade is fighting, the whole army is standing. I order: the line Barut, Luckenwalde cross the swamp along several routes in a deployed battle order. A bolder maneuver to overcome the Barut line.

Ivan Stepanovich didn't give a damn about the mythical Americans, but the chances of entering the capital of the Reich before Zhukov, who nevertheless broke through the Oder line, the aspirant

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but they fell. The reasons for the marshal's irritation are clearly visible in his telegram to the commanders of the 3rd and 4th Guards Tank Armies:

"Marshal Zhukov's troops 1) km from the eastern outskirts of Berlin. I order you to be the first to break into Berlin tonight."

The successful offensive of the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front forced the enemy to abandon the defense of the Oder and a number of strongholds, such as, for example, Frankfurt and Furstenberg.

Konev decided to bring into battle the 28th Army of General A.A. Luchinsky (3rd guards, 20th, 128th rifle corps), concentrated in the second echelon of the front strike force. First, it was necessary to urgently reinforce the tank armies of the front advancing on Berlin with combined arms formations. Secondly, additional forces were needed in order to complete the encirclement of the 9th German Army from the west. The 28th Army was ordered to move from the Fürstenau area in a forced march after the 3rd Guards Tank Army.

On the Dresden direction, the 2nd Army of the Polish Army captured the knot of resistance in the city of Niski and rushed to the west. Parts of the 7th Guards Mechanized Corps and the 254th Rifle Division, having pulled out far ahead, captured Kodersdorf, slipped through Weisenberg and fought street battles in Bautzen. General Korchagin ordered the formation of two forward detachments for a swift attack on Dresden.

However, the situation began to deteriorate rapidly. Field Marshal Scherner expected the main attack of the Russians precisely in this direction and therefore concentrated mobile formations in the Görlitz area to deliver a flank attack. The first, hastily organized counterattacks of the Hermann Goering division and the 20th Panzer Division in the Kodersdorf area were repulsed by formations of the 73rd Rifle Corps and the 8th Self-Propelled Artillery Brigadier of the 52nd Army. General Koroteev decided to bring the 48th Rifle Corps into the breach, which was deployed in vehicles from the left flank of the army.

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Scherner reinforced his strike force with the 72nd and 17th infantry divisions by redeploying forces and united it under the control of the headquarters of the 57th tank corps.

On the morning of April 20, the Germans delivered a strong blow from the south against the formations of the 48th Rifle Corps of General 3.3. Rogozny, cut the Niski-Bautzen road and captured Diza. The next day they defeated the headquarters and rear of the Polish 5th Infantry Division, [the 6th Soviet Tank Brigade and met with units of the Brandenburg Panzer-Grenadier Division advancing from the north, from the Boxberg area. The commander of the 5th Infantry Division, General A. Vashkevich, was killed. The commander of the 254th Stealth Division, Major General M.K., was mortally wounded. Puteiko, the 929th rifle regiment of the division was completely destroyed. The main forces of the Polish army, two divisions of the 48th Rifle Corps and the 7th Guards Mechanized Corps were cut off from their communications. Moreover, in the headquarters of General K. Sverchevsky, poorly oriented in the situation, they continued to draw plans for the assault on Dresden.

On April 22, Marshal Konev ordered a counterattack on the flanks of the wedged enemy grouping by the forces of the 7th Guards Mechanized and 1st Polish Tank Corps deployed in the opposite direction from the west and three rifle divisions of the 52nd Army from the east. The 3rd Assault, 2nd Fighter, and 6th Guards Bomber Air Corps were assigned to support the ground troops. However, the task was not completed. The detachment allocated by General Korchagin under the command of the deputy commander of the corps, Major General V.K. Maksimov, consisting of two reinforced brigades (15 tanks, 17 self-propelled guns, 2043 people) was stopped by the Germans in the Weisenberg area, and the Polish tankers continued to advance on Dresden. Finally, realizing that the Germans were destroying the rear of his army, having lost contact with a number of formations, General Sverchevsky turned the tank corps 180 degrees.

"Such a situation," writes Konev, "would be difficult for any army that had gone through a long combat path. Moreover, it turned out to be sensitive for the 2nd Army of the Polish Army: the Berlin operation was the first after its formation.

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niya ... To this it must be added that the commander-52, General Koroteev, generally speaking a combat and experienced commander, in this case did not show sufficient concern for the junction with the Poles, which led to a breakthrough of the enemy at a deliberate angle - the birth flank. And one more thing: Sverchevsky really wanted to win something really big.

On April 23, the situation worsened even more. The 48th Rifle Corps was divided into separate groups. Parts of the 7th Guards Mechanized Corps, the 254th and 294th Rifle Divisions were surrounded in Bautzen and Weisenberg and repulsed the continuous attacks of the 20th Panzer Division, Brandenburg and Hermann Goering. The 57th Panzer Corps advanced 33 kilometers in the direction of Spremberg. The assault air group of Hans-Ulrich Rudel raged in the air, knocking out Soviet tanks with snipers.

To eliminate the crisis, Konev ordered General Sverchevsky to stop the attack on Dresden, General Zhadov to turn part of the forces of the 5th Guards Army to the south, establish contact with the Polish army and restore the integrity of the front. Then, together with the 1st Polish Tank and 7th Guards Mechanized Corps, attack in an easterly direction on the flank of the German group rushing to the north. The detachment of General Maksimov and units of the 294th Rifle Division, Colonel G.F. Korolenko was to leave Weisenberg and fight his way through Diza to join the main forces of the 52nd Army. They went on a breakthrough on the morning of April 24th. On the way to Diza, Maximov's detachment was surrounded by the Germans and almost completely destroyed. General Maksimov, the head of the operational department of the headquarters of the corps, Major Udovitsky, the commander of the 25th Guards Mechanized Brigade, Colonel Dudka, and the chief of staff of the 57th Guards Tank Brigade, Major Shestakov, were killed in the battle. Parts of the 294th Infantry Division came out to their own in the band of the 116th Division. The remnants of the 7th mechanized corps and the 254th rifle division escaped from Bautzenai on the evening of April 25 and joined with units of the Polish army.

"Hermann Goering" and the 20th Panzer Division continued

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rush north. However, to the north of Bautzen, Zhadov's guards, the 150th Tank Brigade and the 4th Guards Kantemirovsky Tank Corps of General P.P. By

luboyarova.

On April 20, Rokossovsky's troops joined the general offensive of the Red Army. All night the enemy positions were subjected to bomber strikes. Special detachments landed on the western bank of the West Oder. On the interfluvium and dams, an accumulation of forces took place, in the floodplain where roads were laid through the swamps. On the right wing of the part of the 2nd shock army, they installed SMOKE AND "MADE A FURIOUS NOISE".

In the morning, literally with the beginning of artillery preparation, three armies, under the cover of smoke screens, began to force the West Oder River. Thick morning fog limited aviation operations. Rifle units seized bridgeheads and fought for their expansion. The engineering troops began to build pontoon and ferry crossings.

By the evening of the division of the 65th Army, General P.I. Batov (18th, 46th, 105th rifle corps), having pressed the 549th People's Grenadier Division, occupied a bridgehead 6 kilometers wide and up to 1.5 kilometers deep. 31 battalions of four divisions of the first echelon and the 1st assault engineering brigade, fifty 45-mm cannons, several regiments, seventy 82-mm and 120-mm mortars and fifteen SU-76 were transferred to the western coast. The 70th army of General V.S. firmly hooked on the western coast in its sector. Popov (47th, 96th, 114th rifle corps). The main 49th Army of General I.T. Grishina (70th, 121st rifle corps) did not achieve success, all attempts to overcome the West Oder were repelled by the Germans:

"High hopes were pinned on the 49th Army. Interacting with the right-flank units of the 1st Belorussian Front, it was supposed to inflict a cutting blow on the enemy, to push back parts of his 3rd Panzer Army to the north and northwest under the blows of our 70th Army. Given the importance

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ness of the task, the 49th Army more than others were allocated means of reinforcement. And suddenly Grishin tramples on place.

We understand the reasons for the failure. Chief among them is the mistake of army intelligence. Here the interfluvium is indented by numerous canals. One of them was mistaken by intelligence for the main channel of the West-Oder. As a result, all artillery fire was brought down on the bank of the canal, which was defended by insignificant enemy forces. And when our infantry crossed the canal and approached the West Oder, they were met by destructive enemy fire. It was not possible to cross the river... It was all the more disappointing that the army headquarters had aerial photographs of the entire offensive sector. We all felt uncomfortable."

The results of the first day of the operation turned out to be more modest than the front command expected, but nevertheless, the troops of the two armies entrenched themselves on the western bank of the West Oder, penetrating the enemy defenses up to two kilometers. The battles to expand and deepen the captured bridgeheads continued at night. The transfer of troops across the river was carried out at an accelerated pace.

Pilots-nightlights struck at the front edge of the enemy defenses. Enemy aircraft, in turn, tried to use floating mines to destroy the induced crossings. In addition, a detachment of underwater saboteurs "Ost" operated here under the command of Lieutenant Keller, who managed to blow up three pontoon bridges.

On April 20, the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command sent another directive to the commanders of the 1st and 2nd Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts, as well as the commander of the Air Force, armored and mechanized troops. The directive brought identification marks and signals for the Soviet and Anglo-American troops, and also ordered to establish a temporary dividing line in contact with allied units in order to "avoid mixing troops",

prevent accidents and collisions between them. Moreover, in the south, the Americans are quite deep

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who penetrated into the Soviet zone of occupation. And individual incidents have already taken place. So, Guards Major Ivan Kozhedub shot down two R-51 Mustang fighters in April, however, "they are the first climbed."

On that day, Stalin and Antonov signed another document under the heading: "On the need for a humane attitude towards the German population and prisoners of war." In the published version, he looks like that:

"The Headquarters of the Supreme High Command orders:

1. Demand that the troops change their attitude towards the Germans, both prisoners of war and the civilian population, and treat the Germans better.

Cruel treatment of the Germans makes them afraid and makes them resist stubbornly, not surrendering. The civilian population, fearing revenge, organizes itself into gangs. Such our position is unfavorable.

A more humane attitude towards the Germans will make it easier for us to conduct combat operations on their territory and, undoubtedly, will reduce the stubbornness of the Germans in defense.

2. In areas of Germany to the west of the line, the mouth of the river. Oder, r. Oder to Furstenberg and further river. Neisse (western) to create a German administration, and to put German burgomasters in the cities.

The rank and file members of the National Socialist Party, if they are loyal to the Red Army, should not be touched, but only the leaders should be detained if they did not have time to escape.

3. Improving attitudes towards the Germans should not lead to a decrease in vigilance and familiarity with the Germans.

It is noteworthy that this directive concerned only the territory that after the end of the war was supposed to be left as part of "democratic" Germany. And the Germans fled to the west in such obscene numbers that it became unclear with whom to build it.

April 20, 1945 - the beginning of the agony of the Third Reich. All hope has died. The highest generals and various Nazi "fuhrers" faced a problem: to survive any

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fight at the cost or "it is fitting to die"? Everyone solved the dilemma in their own way. Field Marshal Walter Model gave the order to the troops encircled in the Ruhr "cauldron" to stop resistance and shot himself at his headquarters in Lintorf.

Adolf Hitler, accepting congratulations on his birthday and handing the Iron Crosses to the anti-aircraft gunners from the Hitler Youth, announced his decision to remain in Berlin: "I intend to win the battle for Berlin or die in Berlin. I will share the fate of my soldiers and die in battle." The Führer of the German nation considered that it was preferable to fight the last battle in the capital than to die in an obscure Austrian village - there was no greatness in this. Dying, so with music! I wanted something Wagnerian and more blood: "Even if we cannot win, we will drag half the world into oblivion..."

Everything would be fine, but it was impossible to control anything from the cramped and damp Fuhrerbunker, which was an ordinary bomb shelter with bare concrete walls. General Staff, Task Force South and Luftwaffe Headquarters with Reichsmarschall Göring at this time

moved from Zossen and Werder to Berchtesgaden. The command post of the Kriegsmarine was evacuated from Ebeswalde. The headquarters group of the OKW-OKH "North" was relocated first to Kramnitz, then to Neu-Rofen, where the ZKP of the Reichsfuehrer SS was located with all the necessary means

connections.

Everyone understood that no further struggle was possible without Hitler, no capitulation was conceivable by Hitler. The most die-hard "Nazi soldiers" made plans to kidnap the Fuhrer from the catacombs of the Imperial Chancellery and deliver him to the "Alpine Fortress". Schörner called out:

"On behalf of all the brave soldiers fighting for you, and in the name of those who fell in this struggle, I urge you, in view of the gravity of the situation, to immediately leave Berlin and take over the leadership of the Reich. and command of the Wehrmacht in the Southern Theater of Operations. Only you, my Fuhrer, are the guarantor of the integrity of the Reich. Any German and the entire personnel of the Wehrmacht will obey unquestioningly to you alone.

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that. Only you, my Fuhrer, are the hope of Germany in the struggle against states hostile to us. Without you, Germany will collapse. Millions of Germans are waiting, my Fuhrer, for the hour when Germany will be reborn with you. Nothing is lost yet, everything can still be saved, but only with you".

The answer was: "I remain in Berlin to take part with honor in the decisive battle for Germany and to set an example for the rest."

According to Hitler's order, the 9th Army was to remain on the Oder, perk up and, together with the 4th Panzer Army, close the gap between Muskau and Guben. According to the "traitor generals", like Butlar, "for the units of the 9th Army, which were still on the defensive on the Oder, who were under threat of envelopment from both flanks, only one thing remained possible - to quickly leave the Oder and try to connect with the 3rd Army. and the tank army, which also had to withdraw to the west. The objective was to withdraw all of their forces as far west as possible without giving the Russians the opportunity to crush them at Berlin. It was not possible to create any new front for defense from the east after the defeat of the German defense on the Oder, and the defense of Berlin alone, despite its feasibility, was meaningless. This order did not take into account the fact that both armies had already completely used up all the forces at their disposal in the battles to hold their front line and to cover their flanks, which were becoming more and more exposed every day.

The Fuhrer was not going to give up.

On April 2, brigades of the 1st Mechanized Corps of the 2nd Guards Tank Army occupied Bernau and Malchow and made their way to the northeastern outskirts of Berlin. The 9th Guards Tank Corps bypassed the city from the north. The corps of the 3rd shock army crossed the ring highway and entered the suburbs. The 5th Shock Army, with the assistance of the 12th Guards Tank Corps, captured Strausberg and advanced 25 kilometers that day. East to Outer

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the defensive bypass was left by the 1st Guards Tank and 8th Guards Armies.

On the morning of the next day, the main forces of the strike force of the 1st Belorussian Front were already fighting the enemy directly in Berlin. The 47th Army was turned to the west to create an external encirclement front together with the 1st Army of the Polish Army and the 61st Army. To cover the gap between the 47th and 1st Polish armies, the 7th Guards Cavalry Corps advanced.

The tank armies of the 1st Ukrainian Front came close to the outer contour of the Berlin defensive area. Konev decided to reinforce Rybalko with the 10th artillery corps, the 25th breakthrough artillery division, the 23rd anti-aircraft artillery division, the 32nd guards mortar brigade (618 guns and mortars of 120-203 mm caliber and 108 rocket launchers M-31 - not counting anti-aircraft artillery), units of the 16th assault engineering brigade and the 2nd fighter air corps. The 61st rifle division from Luchinsky's army was transferred by motor transport, followed by the 152nd and 130th divisions on foot. In addition, the 10th Guards Tank Corps of Lelyushenko's army was turned to Berlin. The 5th Guards Mechanized Corps occupied Yuterborg and moved towards Gröyenbritzen. The 13th Army, following the tankers, confidently continued the offensive and, ensuring the actions of the front's tank grouping from the rear, covered 20 kilometers in a day. Part of the 5th Guards Army was still finishing off the last remnants of the Spremberg grouping, while the main forces were advancing to the west. Gordov's troops continued to fight with the stubbornly defending Cottbus grouping:

"Having expressed dissatisfaction with the commander of the 3rd Guards for the delay in liquidating this grouping, I allocated large aviation forces to help him - the 4th and 6th bomber corps, the 2nd and part of the 6th fighter corps and the 2nd Guards assault aviation corps. In addition, the commander was ordered to bring into action the 25th tank corps, which was in his second echelon. One

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However, during the liquidation of the Cottbus group, Gordov, in fact, did not use it for its intended purpose. Needless to say, in the area of Cottbus the enemy had a strong anti-tank defense, and the terrain itself was not particularly favorable for the actions of tanks. Nevertheless, in my opinion, at the beginning and in the middle of the battles near Cottbus, Gordov was unnecessarily slow and hesitantly used tanks. At times, he was reluctant to lean towards quick maneuvering actions and the correct and decisive use of the mobility of tank troops associated with them. But the Germans, the marshal notes, fought "literally to the last breath."

Busse's 9th Army abandoned its positions on the Oder and Neisse and retreated to the west. Weidling's 56th Panzer Corps, thrown back to Berlin, took up defensive positions in the city. To the north of Berlin, a combined army was hastily recruited, which received the proud name of the "army group", under the command of Felix Steiner, the failed hero of Operation Solstice. The remnants of the 4th SS division "Policeman", which had 20 active bayonets in each company, the 5th Jaeger, 25th Panzergrenadier Divisions, the 3rd Marine Division, units of the 15th Latvian SS Division, a separate - nye regiments and battalions.

On the morning of April 22, the 3rd Guards Tank Army, having deployed all three corps in the first echelon, began to attack the enemy fortifications. The troops of the army broke through the outer defensive line, captured Zossen, and by the end of the day reached the southern bank of the Teltow Canal. Here the tankers stumbled upon heavy fire from the opposite bank. It was not possible to force the Canal, which had a width of 30-35 meters and a depth of 4.5 meters, on the move. The 4th Guards Tank Army bypassed Luckenwalde with two corps and, advancing 20 kilometers, captured Sarmund on the southwestern approaches to Berlin. The 5th Guards Mechanized Corps covered the left flank of the army, ensuring its turn to the north. Pukhov's 13th Army covered 45 kilometers and reached the level of the left flank of Lelyushenko's army. The 3rd Guards Army stormed Cottbus. Gordov's troops were deployed to the north and northeast.

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As a result of the offensive of the 8th Guards, 69th and 33rd Armies of the 1st Belorussian Front and the 3rd Guards, 3rd Guards Tank and part of the forces of the 28th Army of the 1st Ukrainian Front, the a ring ready to close around the southern wing of the 9th German army.

By the end of April 22, the distance between the advanced units of the 47th Army of Perkhovich, the 2nd Guards Tank Army, advancing from the northeast, and the 4th Guards Tank Army was 40 kilometers, and between the left flank of the 8th Guards and the right flank of 3th Guards Tank Army - no more than 12 kilometers. The headquarters demanded that the front commanders no later than April 24 complete the encirclement of the Frankfurt-Guben grouping of the enemy and prevent its breakthrough to Berlin or to the west. In addition, Stalin established a new dividing line between the fronts. It passed from Lübben through Teupitz, Mittenwalde, Mariendorf to the Antgalsky railway station in Berlin, dividing the city practically in half.

In order to completely cut off from the capital and surround the main forces of the 9th Army, Marshal Zhukov launched his second echelon - the 3rd Army of General A.V. Gorbатов and the 2nd Guards Cavalry Corps of General V.V. Kryukov.

Hitler addressed the German people on the radio and announced that he would personally lead the battle for the capital. At the operational meeting, the idea was also put forward to use the 12th army of General Walter Wenck to unblock Berlin and connect with the troops of Theodor Busse. This new army consisted exclusively of infantry divisions and was manned by conscripts of younger ages. The divisions were assigned not numbers, but the names of German national heroes. The army was formed with the goal of covering the gap in the Western Front, launching a counterattack on American positions and "achieving a radical change in the operational strategic position between the Middle German mountains and the Elbe"! In any case, at the reports, Wenck beamed with enthusiasm, expressed his readiness to perform any combat mission, after which the Führer was inspired and experienced a turn

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a bout of optimism. As Field Marshal Keitel noted, "for some time now, self-deception has become the Führer's main refuge."

However, more pressing problems arose. After analyzing the captured documents, the OKW headquarters came to the conclusion that the Americans were not going to cross the Elbe in the near future, and suggested turning the 12th Army to the east. At the same time, Steiner was supposed to strike at the flank of the grouping of Soviet troops, bypassing the capital from the north and northeast, and restore contact with the 56th tank corps. Hitler grasped at straws and sent Keitel to Wenck's headquarters:

"Face to eye, I briefly outlined the situation near Berlin to Wenck and added only that I see the only way to save the Führer in breaking through his army to the capital and joining with the 9th Army. Now everything depends on him, otherwise it remains only to go against the will of the Führer and "kidnap" him from the Reich Chancellery ... Wenck called the chief of his staff, Oberst of the General Staff Günther Reichhelm. On the headquarters map, I showed them the situation in the Berlin direction, at least the one that was there a day ago. Then he left them alone, and went to have dinner himself, while Wenck dictated the order for the army, a copy of which I was going to take to the Führer.

Theoretically, the army included the Clausewitz Panzer Division and the Schlageter Panzergrenadier Division, but in practice they got involved in battle with units of the 9th American Army west of the Elbe and had no connection with Wenck. Therefore, the field marshal, by his power, subordinated to the command of the 12th army the 41st tank corps of General Rudolf Holste, who held the defense on the Elbe line. Now the corps had to, leaving a minimum guard, deploy with the main forces on the Potsdam, Brandenburg line, strike north of Berlin, drive the enemy back across the Havel River and establish contact with Steiner's army group: "If successful, we would be able to close the resulting gap and hold positions even with relatively small forces, having as a flanking cover

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horse-accessible marshy meadows of the Havel valley. The remaining divisions of Wenck's army - the 20th Army Corps under the command of General Keller - received the task of attacking in an easterly direction to restore communication lines or lines of communication with Berlin and connect in the area of Jüterborg with the 9th Army breaking through to the west. Then all of them were to turn north, "by all means destroy the enemy formations in the southern part of Berlin and link up with the troops in Berlin on a large sector."

In addition to the above, the 12th Army included the 243rd Assault Gun Brigade and all 10 Shtuggs.

The operation was conceived on a grand scale, the position of Berlin was not considered hopeless. But it was April 1945, and the Wehrmacht had "thin guts" for such exercises, given the composition and quality of the troops. It seems that both the "faithful" Keitel and the "faithful Jodl" also took refuge in self-deception.

On the morning of April 23, Steiner's army group attempted to carry out a "deep flank offensive against enemy troops rushing to the west", but was stopped and driven back by Polish divisions and the 7th Guards Cavalry Corps. General S.G. Poplavsky recalled this episode: "K. On the afternoon of April 23, our formations, closely cooperating with the Soviet cavalry, crossed the canal in the Oranienburg region and defeated the enemy's 3rd Naval Division, hastily transferred from another sector of the front.

General Wenck carried out a regrouping of forces, which was not an easy task, since his army, in accordance with Hitler's personal instructions, had to attack simultaneously in two directions, and the division's starting lines were to be marched on foot, overcoming traffic jams created by endless columns refugees from the east. The transitions were facilitated only by the fact that only 60% of the fighters had weapons.

The division "Theodor Kerner" has already entered the battle with units of the 5th Guards Mechanized Corps in the area of Treuen-britzen. On the same day, under the blow of the 6th Guards Mechani

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The division "Friedrich Ludwig Jahn" that did not complete the formation of the corps was hit. The division, in which there were more than 10 thousand soldiers and officers, but there was not ONE howitzer, not a single anti-tank gun and there was one rifle for three, was defeated and thrown back to Potsdam. There she joined the Potsdam division under the command of General Reinmann. Commander Lelyushenko recalled:

"A captured colonel was brought to us, he showed that the division was formed in the first days of April from young men of 15-16 years old. I could not stand it and said to him: "Why are you on the eve of an inevitable catastrophe driving innocent teenage boys to the slaughter?" But what could he say to that? His lips only moved convulsively, the eyelid of his right eye twitched convulsively, and his legs trembled. The sight of this Hitlerite warrior was miserable and disgusting.

Lelyushenko's army was pulling up the rear and preparing to force the Teltow Canal. About 3,000 guns, mortars and self-propelled guns were concentrated on the 4.5-kilometer section of the upcoming breakthrough. Six hundred and fifty barrels per kilometer of front!

On April 24, troops of the 8th Guards and 1st Guards Tank Armies of the 1st Belorussian Front linked up with the 3rd Guards Tank and 28th Armies of the 1st Ukrainian Front southeast of Berlin. As a result, the main forces of the 9th Army and part of the forces of the 4th Panzer Army of the enemy - the 11th SS Panzer Corps, the 5th SS Mountain Rifle Corps, the 5th Army Corps - were cut off from the city and surrounded. The next day, west of Berlin, in the area of Ketzin, the 4th Guards Tank Army met with the troops of the 2nd Guards Tank and 47th armies.

On the morning of April 25, in the area of Hermannsdorf, the army group of Steiner again went on the offensive and was again stopped by the active actions of the Polish units.

On this day, a meeting of Soviet and American troops took place in the Torgau region. General Zhadov recalls:

"April 25 at 13:30 in the Strela area, northwest of Riza, soldiers of the 7th company of the 173rd Guards Rifle

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1st Regiment of the 58th Guards Division, led by the commander of the guard company, Senior Lieutenant Grigory Stepanovich Goloborodko, a former Poltava mechanic, noticed a group of military men moving from the west. Ours, out of habit, were alert, but the soldier's instinct told them that there, in front, were not those with whom they had fought throughout the war. Nevertheless, having adopted battle order, Goloborodko's unit moved towards the unknown. As it soon turned out, it was a reconnaissance group of the 69th Infantry Division of the 1st American Army. The reconnaissance group was commanded by First Lieutenant L. Kotzebue, a former student from Texas, with him were sergeants and soldiers D. Polonsky, M. Shulman, G. Sitnik (later awarded our Order of the Red Star), Forester and others.

About an hour later, in the Torgau area, soldiers of the 2nd Battalion of the 173rd Guards Rifle Regiment of the same 58th Guards Division noticed that a man in military uniform was giving signals from the bell tower of the city church. Guard Lieutenant A.S. Selvashko tried to communicate with him in German, but nothing came of it. Our soldiers fired several shots into the air and suddenly heard the familiar words: "Moscow is America!" It became clear to our Red Army soldiers that there was an American in the church belfry. It was a soldier of the same 69th Infantry Division. Then an officer approached, who said that they were scouts from the 69th Infantry Division of the 1st American Army, and asked our officer to go with him to the battalion headquarters, located fifteen kilometers from the meeting point.

As it turned out later, it was the group of second lieutenant William D. Robertson.

Lieutenant Robertson also remembered this day for the rest of his life: "We understood that the Soviet troops were close, that the war was coming to an end, we were excited by this and, probably, got carried away and violated the order of the authorities not to move further than 10 kilometers from the main forces divisions and ... rolled into the city of Torgau. And then we came under fire from German snipers who had settled in the houses... Leaving the fire, our jeep

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furiously speed traveled through the deserted streets of the city. Suddenly they flew into the territory of the prisoner of war camp, And suddenly the shooting stopped, a shell exploded nearby. "Russians! Soviet! Red Army!" shouted the prisoners of war, pointing their hands at the Elbe. Soviet artillery fired from across the river. We hung out our "flag" on the tower of the city castle. The shooting from across the river stopped... A red rocket went up from there.

I almost cried out of frustration. According to an agreement between the allies, I had to answer with a green rocket, but I did not have it. After all, going on reconnaissance, we did not think that we would meet advanced Soviet units. According to our calculations, they should not have gone to the Elbe. They began to shout: "America! Russia! Comrade! A Russian prisoner of war helped. On the other side, they believed him. Soviet soldiers appeared from behind the forest. They ran to the bridge, blown up by the Germans the day before. Beside myself with joy, I also ran to the bridge ... "

Germany was divided into two parts. In this regard, the troops received instructions from Moscow on the topic "what is possible and what is not there." The directive ordered: first of all, to establish a demarcation line with the American and British units; treat the allies kindly, BUT "no information about our plans and combat missions of our troops

don't tell anyone" do not invite yourself to visit and do not take initiatives to organize friendly meetings; if they invite you - do not refuse, send representatives and call "in response"; in all cases be a model of discipline and order.

The situation on the Dresden direction has changed significantly. The counterattack of the Görlitz group on April 26-27 was finally thwarted by the active defense of the 2nd Army of the Polish Army, the 5th Guards, 52nd Armies and the 31st Army of General P.G. Shafranov. Despite tactical successes, the Germans were unable to prevent the breakthrough of the main forces of the 1st Ukrainian Front. And the troops of the 4th Ukrainian

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front, captured the city of Opava and started fighting on the near approaches to Moravian-Ostrava.

True, the attack on Dresden was stopped, and the Soviet units that were surrounded suffered heavy losses. About 2,500 men remained of the 254th Rifle Division with 27 guns and 40 mortars. Korchagin's tank corps lost 117 armored units. Over 18,000 soldiers and officers, 205 tanks and self-propelled guns were put out of action in the Polish Army.

The armies of the 2nd Belorussian Front fought intense battles to expand their bridgeheads, repulsed enemy counterattacks and continued to cross their troops to the left bank of the Oder. In connection with the success of Zhukov, the Stavka ordered Rokossovsky to act in accordance with the original plan, that is, instead of turning to the southwest, advance in the western and northwestern directions, and part of the forces to strike around Stettin. By the end of April 25, formations of the 65th and 70th armies had completed the penetration of the main line of enemy defenses. In six days they advanced 20 kilometers. Using the success of its neighbors, the 49th Army crossed the Vest-Oder on the morning of April 26 along the crossings of the 70th Army and advanced 10-12 kilometers by the end of the day. Batov's army captured Stettin by storm and broke through the enemy's defenses on the Randow River. On the same day, in the zone of the 65th Army, the division of the 2nd Shock Army of Fedyuninsky began to cross.

Having completed the crossing of the Oder, Rokossovsky's troops began to carry out a maneuver in order to cover the main forces of the 3rd German Panzer Army from the south and southwest.

The 65th Army with the 1st Guards Tank Corps was given the task of pressing in a northwestern direction to press enemy troops operating northeast of the Stettin-Neubrandenburg-Rostock line to the sea.

The 2nd shock army advanced on Anklam and Stralsund in two corps, and part of the forces had to clear the islands of Usedom and Rügen from the enemy.

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The 70th Army with the 3rd Guards Tank Corps advanced in the general direction towards Waren and Wismar.

The 49th Army with the 8th Mechanized Corps and the 3rd Guards Cavalry Corps was heading straight west - towards the Elbe.

GET IT!

At the end of April, the Soviet command focused all its attention on Berlin, which for the soldiers and officers of the Red Army "embodied fascism in all its bestial essence."

The capital of the Reich began to prepare for defense in January 1945.

On March 6, General Helmut Reimann was appointed commandant of Berlin. He had 92 Volkssturm battalions and separate units at his disposal.

For the convenience of managing hostilities, the city was divided into nine sectors. All the streets leading to the center were blocked by barricades, the approaches to them were mined, and the bridges were prepared for blowing up. In addition, many natural and artificial water barriers and obstacles crossed Berlin. These included the Spree River, up to 100 meters wide, flowing through the city from the southeast to the northwest, as well as a large number of canals.

The most thorough preparation was made for the central sector, which covered the main state and administrative institutions, including the Reichstag and the Imperial Chancellery. Trenches were dug in the streets and squares for artillery, tanks and self-propelled guns, and numerous firing structures were prepared. All defensive positions were interconnected by communications. A network of underground structures was widely used, without which no metropolis can exist: bomb shelters, metro stations and tunnels, sewers and other objects. Several dozen reinforced concrete bunkers were built throughout the city, and a large number of armored caps were also installed.

In addition, there was such a curiosity as three giant air defense tower batteries. They were concrete structures.

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which were six-storey two-tower complexes (a control tower and a gun turret) with a height of about 40 meters, which were equipped with radars, rangefinders, fire control devices and unique twin 128-mm automatic anti-aircraft guns, which had a total rate of fire of 20-24 rounds per minute and throwing 26-kilogram high-explosive fragmentation grenades to a height of up to 15 kilometers. The lower platforms housed 20-mm and 37-mm anti-aircraft guns. The towers were built in 1940-1942 to repel attacks by Anglo-American aircraft, which dropped kilotons of explosives on the city from high altitudes. At the same time, the "anti-aircraft towers" served as a shelter for the population - the thickness of the ceilings above the two upper floors was 4 meters, there were ventilation and an emergency diesel generator. The first tower battery was placed in the Tiergarten park, the second in the Friedrichshain park, and the third in the Humboldthain park. On the night of April 22, the towers opened fire on ground targets for the first time.

On April 24, the commandant of Berlin became the commander of the 56th Panzer Corps, who had withdrawn to the city, General Weidling, who placed his command post in the Tiergarten anti-aircraft tower. Looking around, the general realized: "It is impossible to defend Berlin and from a military point of view it is pointless, since the German command did not have sufficient forces for this, moreover, by April 24, the German command did not have any - many regular formations, with the exception of the security regiment "Gross Deutschland" and the SS brigade guarding the imperial office.

The formations of the corps — Panzer Division "Müncheberg", 20th and 18th Panzer Grenadier, 9th Parachute, 11th SS Division "Nordland" — were distributed among defense sectors, alternating with various consolidated groups, subunits Volkssturm and police, construction battalions and airfield service battalions, Hitler Youth detachments and SS detachments. The total strength of the garrison was 100-110 thousand people, and this was clearly not enough to protect one of the largest cities in Europe.

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The summary of the generalized combat experience of the 8th Guards Army stated:

"For the defense of such a large city, surrounded on all sides, there were not enough forces to defend each building, as was the case in other cities, so the enemy defended mainly groups of quarters. And inside them are separate buildings and objects,

which are the key position of the district, or the whole administrative district of the city - this was facilitated by a large number of canals that isolate individual districts of the city".

In Berlin, there were still up to 2.5 million inhabitants and refugees from the eastern regions of the country.

We return again to the question of military expediency. After all, Berlin could not have been taken. In any case, such a judgment was expressed by one of the best commanders, General A.V. Gorbato: "I am of the opinion that, from a military point of view, Berlin should not have been stormed. Of course, there were also political considerations, rivalry with the allies, and they were in a hurry to salute. But it was enough to encircle the city, and he himself would have surrendered in a week or two. And in the assault on the very eve of victory, in street battles, we put at least a hundred thousand soldiers. The same one hundred thousand that Eisenhower did not want to "put down".

The Soviet troops participating in the liquidation of the Berlin group included 464 thousand people, over 12.7 thousand guns and mortars. 2,100 rocket artillery installations, about 1,500 tanks and self-propelled artillery installations.

The 2nd Guards Tank Army was regrouped to the area northwest of Berlin, having received its own offensive zone. To the west of the city, the 9th Guards Uman Tank Corps of General N.D. Vedeneva.

The troops of the 3rd shock army, reinforced by the 9th Bobruisk tank corps of General I.F. Kirichenko, two heavy tank and four self-propelled artillery regiments (total 195 combat vehicles), fought in the north-eastern and northern parts of Berlin.

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The 5th shock army penetrated the city from the east. As a means of supporting the infantry, General Berzarin was subordinated to the 11th Radom Tank Corps of General I.I. Yushchuk (125 tanks and self-propelled guns), 11th and 67th heavy guards, 220th tank brigades, two self-propelled artillery regiments. The tank brigades were attached to the rifle corps and distributed among divisions for direct support of the infantry.

The 8th Guards and 1st Guards Tank (212 tanks and self-propelled guns in two corps) armies captured Berlin from the southeast.

The 3rd Guards Tank Army (562 tanks and self-propelled guns) with two rifle divisions was preparing to cross the Teltow Canal in the southern part of the city. To their left, the 10th Guards Tank Corps of the 4th Guards Tank Army entered the canal. To conduct street fighting, he was attached to the 350th Infantry Division.

Taking into account the accumulated experience in the struggle for settlements, assault detachments were created in each division as part of reinforced battalions or companies. Each such detachment, apart from infantry, included artillery, tanks, self-propelled guns, sappers and flamethrowers. It was intended for actions in any one direction, which usually included one street, or the assault on a large object. To capture smaller objects from the same detachments, assault groups were allocated, consisting of a rifle squad to a platoon, reinforced with 2-4 guns, 1-2 tanks or self-propelled guns.

As a rule, the beginning of the actions of assault detachments and groups was preceded by a short but powerful artillery preparation. A significant part of the artillery, up to twelve inches, was used for direct fire. Before attacking a fortified building, the assault detachment was usually divided into two groups. One of them, under cover of tank and artillery fire, broke into the building, blocked the exits from the basements, and then destroyed them with grenades and bottles of combustible mixture. The second group cleared the upper floors of submachine gunners and snipers. To combat infantry settled in houses and basements, it is convenient and effective

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Captured faustpatrons, which our fighters willingly used, turned out to be effective weapons. Thus, by the beginning of the assault, Katukov's armies had stocked up 3,000 of them.

On April 24, the 3rd shock army, slowly advancing towards the center of Berlin, captured the suburb of Reinickendorf and reached the northern bank of the Berlin-Spandauer-Schiffarts canal. General Kuznetsov, who had already mentally set his sights on the Reichstag, gave a personal scolding to the command of the 7th Rifle Corps: "The 7th Corps has actually been trampling around in one place for the past two days. All this happened only because the commanders of regiments, divisions and the commander himself did not really organize the battle and did not show the proper exactingness towards their subordinates. And for the tankers Kirichenko, the commander found a kind word: "Order the brigade commanders to lead their brigades on the head tanks and lead their attack on Berlin, otherwise you will not win either the honor or the glory of your corps.

You will then tell the children about panzerfausts."

On the right, the 12th Mechanized Corps and the 12th Guards Tank Corps came out to the same channel. The formations of the armies of Chuikov and Katukov crossed the Spree.

"The axis of our offensive passed along Wilhelmstrasse," Katukov recalls, "resting on the Tiergarten park, which is not far from the imperial chancellery and the Reichstag. Faustniks interfered with us very much. Another one will sit down in a sewer well or in the basement of a house and hit the tanks that have escaped into the street. He fired a faustpatron - and the car went up in flames...

We knew that there was a subway in the German capital. But in the heat of battle, they either forgot about it, or simply underestimated the importance of underground utilities from a military point of view. Meanwhile, they gave the Nazis excellent opportunities for maneuver. Using the subway, the Nazis could strike from the rear against the Soviet troops that had already broken through to the city center... |

Usually sappers and submachine gunners paved the way for tanks, having previously smoked faustniks from the cracks. Attempts to use tanks without cover only led to heavy losses from artillery and faustnikov fire. But machine gunners

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there were few, and the tankers often had to clear their own way. Only two cars could move through the narrow streets at a time. The first tanks fired, and the next ones stood in line. If one of the machines broke down, another one took its place. So, meter by meter, suppressing firing points, the guards cut their way into the dense defense of the enemy.

A real conveyor of death!

Already after the war, the army commander said: "After all, 8 thousand tankers, 4 brigade commanders, 22 battalion commanders, several regiment commanders, two hundred tanks died there."

The 3rd Guards Tank Army, having carried out a powerful 55-minute artillery preparation, crossed the Teltow Canal; the leader of the 6th guards Kiev tank corps of General V.A. Mitrofanov, developing the offensive in a northern direction, by the end of the day reached the Berlin-Potsdam railway in the suburb of Lichtenfelde.

Due to the unstable weather and the fact that the "theater of operations" was shrouded in smoke, the use of bomber aircraft was difficult. Nevertheless, on April 25, the bombers of the 16th Air Army launched two massive attacks on the center of Berlin, in which a total of 1,489 aircraft took part. At night, the armada of the 18th Air Army reached the target.

They must have hit the Germans after all. But Rybalko's tankers also got a lot from their own aviation, which, "lowering a bomb load from high altitudes, bombed our battle formations,

moreover, up to 100 people were killed and wounded, 16 vehicles and 6 guns were burned. Regarding these outrages, the army commander asked the commander of the front to conduct an investigation." Lelyushenko's tankers also got the chance: "For two and a half days we were under attack from our aircraft. A lot of work needs to be done on organizing interaction with aviation." And to Chuikov's infantrymen: "In Berlin, our aviation bombarded the headquarters of the 4th Corps, about 100 people were out of action. The headquarters of the 29th corps was also beaten up by its aviation, while at the observation post I had a general

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Senatorov - deputy commander of the air army, the ion could not do anything.

As a result, the Chief of Staff of the 3rd Guards Tank Army, Lieutenant General D.D. Bakhmetiev, "I had to ask Marshal Konev that there was no aviation, because our troops began to be afraid of their aviation, as soon as aviation appears, they scatter in all directions."

Aviation in the Berlin operation did not justify the hopes placed on it. Marx's laws of dialectics did not work, the quantity did not turn into quality. The best Tu-2 front-line bombers in the world, which still had to be used, did not show their worth.

"The main drawback here is," explains General Telegin, "that these facts (when they bomb their own) are attributed to newly arrived formations (Tu-2 especially), which the command of the 16th VA did not provide with the necessary training. (?), did not supply experienced navigators and did not properly organize control from the ground. By the beginning of the operation, 16 VA received 590 new crews. Action on large settlements requires special training of the pilot not only on a plan or map, but also on objects, which, however, was not done to the proper extent by the army command, and this should be firmly taken into account by them.

In general, a comparison of the combat and non-combat losses of Soviet aviation shows that in 1941 the "Stalin's falcons" flew "further, higher and faster" than in the fourth year of the war, both because of their early training and the low quality of the produced product factories.

In 1941, non-combat losses amounted to 42.5% of the total, in 1942 - 35.5%, in 1943 - 50.2%, in 1944 - 66%. Finally, in 1945 - 68%. This means that 4,300 aircraft were killed in battle, were shot down by enemy anti-aircraft guns, destroyed by enemy fire and bombardment at airfields, and 9,000 aircraft were losses to which the enemy had nothing to do.

And they are trying to prove to us that they fought not by numbers, but by skill?

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The fighting in the city did not stop day or night. Almost no one took prisoners, except that sometimes the assault groups needed a "language" or a guide who knew the area. By the end of April 26, the 2nd Guards Tank Army crossed the Berlin-Spandauer-Schiffarts canal and reached the northern bank of the Spree. The 3rd shock army also crossed the canal in order to rest against the Verbindungs canal. The 5th shock army continued to press the SS division "Nordland". The assault groups of the 8th Guards Army came close to the Temelhof airfield. The 1st Guards Tank Army developed the offensive in a northwestern direction, waging stubborn street battles in the Neukölln area. The forward detachments of Rybalko's army, having captured the southern suburbs, made their way to the streets of Greater Berlin.

Along with stepping up efforts to defeat the Berlin garrison, the Headquarters considered it necessary to immediately begin the liquidation of the German troops surrounded southeast of Berlin. According to Soviet data, the Frankfurt-Guben grouping consisted of up to 200,000 people (prisoners showed up to 150,000). It was armed with over 2000 guns, more than 300 tanks and self-propelled guns. The Soviet command involved in the "liquidation" of the 3rd, 69th, 33rd armies and the 2nd Guards Cavalry Corps of the 1st Belorussian

Front, 3rd Guards and 28th Army, as well as the rifle corps of the 13th Army and the 25th Tank Corps of the 1st Ukrainian Front. The actions of the ground troops were supported by seven aviation corps.

In order to prevent a breakthrough of the blockaded grouping in the western direction, the troops of the 28th and part of the forces of the 3rd Guards Armies went on the defensive.

At the same time, General Busse received an order, on the one hand, to hold the Dahme, Luckau, Lübbenau line at all costs in order to create conditions for communication with Army Group Center, on the other hand, to advance in a westerly direction, cut off from the south, Soviet troops who broke into Berlin, and to strike them from the rear. Without much thought, Busse decided to break through to the west through forests,

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stretching from the village of Halbe through Kummersdorf to Luckenwalde.

On the morning of April 26, Soviet troops launched an offensive against the encircled group, trying to cut and destroy it piece by piece. Marshal Konev describes the current disposition as follows:

"All three armies of the 1st Belorussian Front, with great forces and great energy, hit the German grouping from the north, northeast and east. They tried to cut the grouping with their blows, but the fascist German troops all the time slipped out from under their blows and, compressing like a spring, in turn pressed on the armies of our front, which stood in their way and blocked their way to the southwest. .

And the harder they were pressed and beaten from behind, the more energy they broke forward - to our rear. Every blow they struck from behind evoked, as it were, an echo in their blow to us, here in front. Condensing their battle formations, the enemy attacked us more and more actively. And nothing else could be expected from him. He had no choice but to surrender. True, the enemy could try to pass through our battle formations and connect with Wenck.

This was the peculiarity of the situation. Actions against other encircled groupings—say, Stalingrad or Korsun-Shevchenko—were carried out by concentric blows converging towards the center. Here it was completely different. The group itself was active and mobile. She strove to break through at all costs and carried out this task with all her strength and means. And since it made its way to us, then our situation became rather difficult from this.

At noon on April 26, the reconnaissance battalion of the SS Frundsberg division and units of the 21st Panzer Division reached Halbe along forest roads and, without waiting for the main forces to approach, attacked the positions of the 58th Infantry Division of the 3rd Guards Army. The Germans cut through a corridor in a narrow area and began to move west. However, arrived in time for you

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the handle of the regiment of the 389th rifle division and the 7th guards anti-tank brigade, during two days of fierce fighting, managed to "seal" the neck of the breakthrough again. The group that had broken through was surrounded in the Barut area and the divisions of the 3rd Guards Rifle Corps of the 28th Army were almost completely liquidated, about 3,000 German soldiers and officers surrendered.

In Berlin, formations of the two fronts penetrated deeply into the enemy's defenses and began hostilities in the central sector of the capital. On April 27, brigades of the 1st Mechanized Corps of the 2nd Guards Tank Army joined with units of the 7th Guards Corps of the 3rd Guards Tank Army, isolating the garrison from the Potsdam group. General Bondanov turned his corps towards the center; by the end of the day [2nd Guards Tank Corps of General

M.F. Salminov broke into one of the central districts of Berlin - Charlottenburg. The 3rd Guards Army crossed the Verbindungs Canal and went ashore on the Spree. Katukov's guards, in cooperation with Chuikov's guards, drove the enemy out of 80 blocks and reached the railway junction south of the Anhalt and Potsdam stations. The commander of the 1st Guards Tank Corps received the task of capturing the Reichstag and clearing the Tiergarten park of the enemy.

The 3rd Guards Tank Army fought stubborn battles at the turn of the ring railway:

"... the front line runs along the railway embankment, which is a natural boundary and an obstacle not only for tanks, but also in many places for infantry. Most of the bridges and viaducts have been blown up, and the remaining passages in them are blocked by gouges - 2-3 rows - and barricaded. Firing structures on the front line are located directly in the embankment in the form of DZO Tov for machine guns, artillery positions and separately buried tanks. The surviving buildings, mainly stationary buildings, stations were turned into strongholds. The streets adjoining these strongholds are littered with scrap, barricaded with railway cars. This part of the city is the most heavily raz-.

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ruined, has an insignificant number of surviving buildings. The streets have been reduced to rubble, and the movement of tanks along them is difficult. In addition to the "natural" ones (formed as a result of the bombing of aircraft), there are barriers, barricades made of stone and wood, blockages from household utensils, etc. In the most critical places, the barricades are reinforced with explosive barriers (foci of mines, land mines).

On the same day, the 9th Guards Tank Corps, together with the 125th Rifle Corps of the 47th Army and the 6th Guards Mechanized Corps, drove the Germans out of Potsdam.

As a result of the concentric offensive, by the end of April 27, the enemy grouping was squeezed into a narrow strip that stretched from east to west for 16 kilometers. Due to the fact that its width was only 3-5 kilometers, the entire territory occupied by the enemy was under the constant influence of fire weapons of the Soviet troops. The Germans lost the airports in Tempelhof and Gatow and tried to use Charlottenburgstrasse for landing aircraft.

Only by the morning of April 28 did the divisions of the 12th German Army take their starting positions between Belzig and Wittenberg. By this time, two construction battalions remained on the Western Front, engaged in continuous mining of the main line of defense. In the center of the strike force, the division "Gutten" advanced, on the left - the division "Schill", on the right - the division "Scharnhorst". The 17th Guards Mechanized Brigade of the 6th Guards Mechanized Corps and the 70th Self-Propelled Artillery Brigade were hit. In the afternoon, the Germans broke through into the forest of Leninerforst, where in the afternoon they met with the "advancing in the opposite direction" remnants of the Potsdam and Friedrich Ludwig Jahn divisions. The vanguards of General Gerhard Engel's division "Gutten" were located 15 kilometers from the crossing over the Havel, southwest of Potsdam. However, here the army of Wenck and stuck. General Lelyushenko threw in an additional 35th Guards Mechanized Brigade and counterattacked the enemy during

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flank by the forces of the 5th Guards Mechanized Corps of General E.P. Ermakov. In addition, he had to remove one brigade of the 10th Panzer Corps from the assault on Berlin. In addition, Konev concentrated reserves in the areas of Zossen, Luckenwalde, Yuterborg. The situation was difficult. In general, according to the marshal, "The Berlin operation was perhaps the most difficult of all the operations that I had the opportunity to carry out during the Great Patriotic War."

Meanwhile, the corps of the 2nd Guards Tank Army continued their offensive in the city in the direction of the Tiergarten park. In the central part of the city they had to face

tanks dug into the ground. Most of the army's guns and even rocket artillery installations were put on direct fire. The 3rd shock army cleared the area of Moabit, which lay immediately north of the Reichstag, and reached the banks of the Spree. The 9th Rifle Corps of the 8th Guards Army, together with the 11th Guards Tank Corps, captured the Anhalt Station. As we moved towards the center of the city, the enemy's resistance became more and more fierce. The remnants of the garrison defended stubbornly. There was now fighting for every building and every intersection.

"The density of our battle formations has increased," Chuikov squeaks. - Fire maneuver reduced to the limit. There came a moment when moving forward could be compared with the work of miners of mine adits. Only through gaps in thick stone walls, through piles of ruins, through heaps of reinforced concrete blocks with torn fittings, could one break through from one ulip to another, from block to block."

Katukov's tanks, squeezed into the cramped streets, actually acted in columns and suffered heavy losses. There was a desperate lack of infantry. To help the tankers, they had to leave the army headquarters security company, "which consisted mainly of elderly people, participants in the imperialist and civil wars." Commander of the 1st Guards Tank Brigade, Colonel A.M. Temnik "gathered the staff of the headquarters and, having ordered everyone to arm themselves with machine guns, personally led

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assault group. An hour later, the brigade commander was mortally wounded in the stomach: "He was walking down the street, and a woman from the third floor threw a faustpatron."

Marshal Konev's observations:

"During the Berlin operation, the Nazis managed to destroy and knock out more than eight hundred of our tanks and self-propelled guns. Moreover, the bulk of these losses are accounted for by battles in the city itself ...

Volkssturm battalions, which were dominated by elderly people and teenagers, were especially abundantly supplied with faustpatrons.

The Faustpatron is one of those means that can create a feeling of psychological confidence in people who are not physically prepared and not trained in war that, having become soldiers only yesterday, they can really do something today.

And I must say, these Faustniks, as a rule, fought to the end and at this last stage showed much greater stamina than the battered German soldiers, but broken by defeats and many years of fatigue.

Soldiers still only surrendered when they had no other choice. The same should be said about the officers. But their fighting spirit has already died down. All that remained was a grim, hopeless determination to fight until the order to surrender was received.

And in the ranks of the Volkssturm during the days of the decisive battles for Berlin, a mood prevailed that I would characterize as hysterical self-sacrifice. These defenders of the third empire, including very young boys, saw in themselves the personification of the last hope for a miracle, which, against all odds, must happen at the very last moment.

Rybalko's tank army pushed in from the south, more and more invading the zone of the 1st Belorussian Front, leading to friction between ambitious commanders.

On the evening of April 28, Konev sent a request to Zhukov to change the direction of the attack:

"According to the report of Comrade Rybalko, the armies of Comrade Chuikov and Comrade Katukov of the 1st Belorussian Front received the task of advancing to the north-west along the southern coast of the Landwehr Canal. In a way,

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they cut the battle formations of the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front advancing to the north. I ask for orders to change the direction of the offensive of the armies of Comrade Chuikov, etc. Katukov.

Georgy Konstantinovich compiled a report to Joseph Vissarionovich, at the end of which he indicated:

"The offensive of Konev's units in the rear of the 6th Guards. Ai G[gv. TA created confusion and mixing of parts, which made it extremely difficult to manage the battle. Their further progress in this direction may lead to even greater mixing and to difficulty in management."

Reporting the above, I ask you to establish a dividing line between the troops of the 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts or allow me to change units of the 1st Ukrainian front in Berlin.

At the direction of Zhukov, the commission of the headquarters of the 8th Guards Army investigated "the fact that units of the 1st Ukrainian Front were in the offensive zone of the 1st Belorussian Front" and established: "The movement of units of the 1st Ukrainian Front in zone 8 The 1st Guards Army is explained by the desire to be the first to capture the area of the central institutions of Germany and take possession of the Reichstag.

By the directive of the Headquarters, the dividing line between the two fronts was shifted to the northwest, cutting off Konev's troops from Greater Berlin, the Reichstag and "central institutions".

At this time, units of the 3rd shock army stood on the banks of the Spree near the Moltke bridge. The Reichstag was only a few hundred meters away.

At the suggestion of Keitel, the Fuhrer dismissed General Heinrici, who, instead of fighting to the last bullet, "retreated without authorization." General Student was appointed commander of the Vistula Army Group.

Early in the morning of April 29, the main forces of the 9th German Army again rushed through the village of Halbe to break through. The Germans literally pressed against the positions of the Soviet troops in columns. The guns of the 7th anti-tank brigade, put on buckshot, shot them from a pistol distance, "masses of enemy corpses lay around the firing

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positions, and the enemy continued to press. Despite huge losses, the Germans managed to break through first through the positions of the formations of the 3rd Guards Army near Halbe, then they broke through the defenses of the 3rd Guards Corps of the 28th Army and created a corridor on Luckenwalde up to 2 kilometers wide. In the end, in the Belitsa region, having scattered the 61st and 63rd Guards Tank Brigades of the 10th Guards Tank Corps, they left the "boiler" in the disposition of the | 2nd Army 35-40 thousand soldiers and officers and several thousand refugees.

The same, as General Gorbatov put it, "crazy attacks" in the northern direction were beaten off by the 3rd Army:

"We intended to go to the Dama River, but, having advanced two or three kilometers beyond the line of lakes, we were forced to stop at this turn. The enemy continued to attack us with tight chains; Hitler's command completely ceased to reckon with losses.

On April 29, the enemy will fall upon us with the whole mass of manpower and fire. Expecting this, we dug in well and stocked up on ammunition. Indeed, with the dawn, the Germans went on the offensive in denser battle formations and attacked not in chains, but in columns. There was no military reason left in this at all. Courage too. They were driven forward by desperation and, of course, by the fascist barrage detachments shooting at them in the back (Gorbatov is an "authoritative" general, but in this case he doesn't really believe in "fascist barrage detachments"). Difficult

imagine this battle in a rare pine forest without a single bush! Our troops fired prone, from the stop, confidently and accurately. The enemy, on the other hand, walked at full height and fired on the move, inaccurately, without seeing the target. The entire twelve-kilometer strip in front of us was littered with the corpses of enemies.

During this day, it happened several times that the battalion commanders (who were in the same chain with the soldiers) thought that the defense in their sector would not withstand and the enemy would break through. But they all survived.

Only in some places did small enemy groups manage to infiltrate, but they were also destroyed or captured by our rear units. The largest group is

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Obviously, more than three thousand people broke through at the junction of our two divisions, but even those did not go far.

Those German units that could not break through the Soviet barriers were destroyed or captured by the exodus | May. During the liquidation of the Frankfurt-Guben grouping, Soviet troops captured 120 thousand people, captured more than 1,500 field guns, 17,600 vehicles and a lot of various military equipment. |

Marshal Konev, comparing the actions of Venk and Busse from a professional point of view, paid tribute to the latter: "Venk, having received strong blows in the very first battles, continued to fight, so to speak, according to the protocol, if only to fulfill orders, and nothing more. And the 9th Army, breaking through from the encirclement, acted boldly, assertively, fought to the death. And it was precisely with such a decisive character of her actions that she caused us a lot of trouble and difficulties in the last days of the war.

And Wenk really ran out of steam. On the afternoon of April 29, he sent a radiogram to the OKW:

"The army, and in particular the 20th Army Corps, which temporarily established contact with the Potsdam garrison and was able to ensure the withdrawal of the latter, is under such strong enemy pressure on the entire front that an attack on Berlin is no longer possible, especially since support by forces The 9th Army cannot be counted on either."

Meanwhile, from the Berlin bunker to Mecklenburg, where the KP "OKW-Nord" migrated, the Fuhrer's requests were carried on short waves:

"Where is Wenck? When will the offensive in the Potsdam direction begin?

"Where is the 9th Army?"

"Where is the Holste group?"

"Why isn't Steiner coming?"

Keitel recalled:

"Over dinner, Jodl and I discussed possible answers - the first of them I compiled myself. In a soldierly way, without smoothing over and in full accordance with the seriousness of the situation, I reported on the hopelessness of attempts to free

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Berlin. As a result of the retreat of the left wing of the "Vistula" army group to the west, Steiner cannot develop the offensive against Berlin and, together with Holste's corps, is now forced to provide rear cover for the army group ... About the location of the main forces of Theodore Busse, we
nothing is known...

In conclusion, I wrote: "I consider hopeless attempts to deblock Berlin and break through the corridor from the western direction. I propose to break through Potsdam to connect with Wenck, in all other cases - the immediate departure of the Fuhrer to South Germany.

Having received this answer, Hitler went to write his will and clean his "Walter", and the adjutant ordered to stock up on gasoline.

On April 29, the 12th Guards Tank Corps of the 2nd Tank Army captured a serviceable bridge across the Landwehr Canal and fought to expand the bridgehead. Troops of the 5th shock army stormed the complex of stone buildings of the guest house. Parts of the 8th Guards and 1st Guards Tank Armies after fierce fighting by 21 o'clock reached Budapesterstrasse in the area south of the Zoological Garden. Further progress was stopped by a "powerful fire screen" from the garden, where, in particular, there was an anti-aircraft tower No. 1. Katukov writes:

"The zoological garden, behind which one can see the green massif of the Tiergarten park, is surrounded by a two-meter-high reinforced concrete fence. Reinforced concrete bunkers towered in the park itself, and stone buildings were prepared in advance for defense. All the streets leading to the zoo were blocked by barricades, which were shot through by artillery and machine-gun fire. The garrison of the garden numbered up to 5 thousand people. We had to liquidate this last knot together with the guardsmen of the 39th rifle division ...

Fire is open from all guns. The zoo was covered with dust and fumes. In this terrible cacophony, the roar of the engines of our bombers is not even heard, although they swept quite low and, turning over the zoo, brought down on

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bombing him. And here is the signal to attack. Submachine gunners, sappers, motorized riflemen rushed into the passages made and took possession of the aquarium area. But it was not possible to capture reinforced concrete bunkers. The Nazis defended them with the stubbornness and desperation of the doomed. Then 152-mm guns were put on direct fire and from a distance of 200-300 meters they hit the bunkers from them. Did not help! The bunkers continued to snarl with fire, heavy shells did not penetrate their thick walls." —

The 3rd Guards Tank Army within the new borders "remained to clear an area of about 4 km of the urban area of Wilmersdorf". Konev lost the competition with Zhukov: "Everyone who fought will understand how psychologically difficult it was for Pavel Semenovitch (even more difficult for Ivan Stepanovich. - Auth.) to lead his tankers beyond the established line. And in fact: they were the first to enter the breakthrough, the first to turn towards Berlin, captured Zossen, crossed the Telt Canal, from the outskirts of Berlin, after fierce and bloody battles, broke through to the center and suddenly, in the midst of the last battle, received an order to surrender their plot to a neighbor. Is it easy to get over it? Of course, an order is an order, and, of course, it must be unconditionally carried out. It was done, but it wasn't easy."

To the north of the city, the troops of Belov's 61st Army, with the forces of the 89th Rifle Corps, crossed the Hohenzollern Canal and attacked along its northern bank, entering the rear of Steiner's grouping. Units of the 80th Rifle Corps advancing south of the canal reached the Oranienburg area. After that, the remnants of Steiner's group ran to the Elbe.

In Italy, at the headquarters of Field Marshal Alexander, representatives of the German command signed a document on the unconditional surrender of Army Group C. The Soviet side was represented by General A.P. Kislenko.

On April 30, the corps of the 2nd Guards Tank Army reached the Tiergarten park. To assist Bogdanov's tankers, the 1st Polish Infantry Division was sent to the city. The advance of the 5th shock army practically stalled. Parts of Katukov stormed the Zoological Garden, parts of Kuznetsov stormed the Reichstag.

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The troops of the 3rd Shock Army started fighting for "object No. 105" the day before.

This institution of the times of the Weimar Republic did not play any role in the life of the Third Reich, but it was he who was chosen for the role of "the historical personification of the German state" and "the stronghold of fascism". On the other hand, something still had to be chosen. Gray, unremarkable, except for the glass dome, obscured by the bulk of the Royal Opera House and Himmler's House, the two-story building of the Reichstag, the Soviet commanders at first could not even identify. Through the smoke and darkness, General Shatilov from his observation post was intensely examining through binoculars the dome with a bronze rider at the base. The devil only knows - it looks a lot like our Bolshoi Theater: "I estimated the direction and distance from my own. Yes, probably the Reichstag. After all, it must somehow stand out among the surrounding houses. How else can you distinguish it? Until now, I have not seen photographs or paintings depicting the Reichstag, nor have I heard verbal descriptions of it. "Then I'll figure it out again according to the plan, make sure," I decided. - Let the prisoners have to be asked. And what's good, let's take something that's not right - you won't end up with shame ... "

The Reichstag garrison numbered about a thousand soldiers and officers. Deep ditches were dug around the building, various barriers were set up, artillery and machine-gun emplacements were equipped. In front of the facade, 88-mm anti-aircraft guns were exposed for direct fire, on the right, at the Brandenburg Gate, tanks were dug in.

The task of mastering the Reichstag was assigned to the 79th Rifle Corps of General S.N. Pereverkina. In the first echelon, the 150th division of General V.M. Shatilov and the 171st division of Colonel A.I. Resentment. They were supported by the 23rd Guards Tank Brigade, the 351st Heavy Self-Propelled Regiment, the 85th Tank Regiment [203rd Self-Propelled Artillery Regiment — 63 tanks and self-propelled guns. The Military Council of the Army issued in advance to each division the Banner of Victory for arming on the dome of the building, in total, therefore, nine banners. So, the 150th Infantry Division got Banner No. 5. Divisional Commander

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General V.M. Shatilov handed it to his favorite, the commander of the 756th Infantry Regiment, Colonel F.M. Zinchenko, and he, in turn, to the "best scouts" of the 1st battalion, sergeants M.A. Egorov and M.V. Kantaria. In addition, each battalion, company, platoon, and section had their own red flags of various sizes and shapes to indicate the occupied territory.

During April 29, the 756th Rifle Regiment of the 150th Division and the 380th Rifle Regiment of the 171st Division, having captured the Moltke bridge, crossed to the southern bank of the Spree and cleared the adjacent buildings of the enemy. At 1500, units of two divisions attacked the Reichstag, but soon lay under crossfire. In the evening, General Shatilov brought into battle the 674th Rifle Regiment of Lieutenant Colonel A.D. Plekhodanov, who, unlike other heroes of this story, did not leave memoirs. Noah's records have been preserved:

"April 29, at about 22:30, V. Shatilov called me to his observation post, which was located in the tunnel under the railway, and said:

— Comrade Plekhodanov! Zinchenko has big losses. He cannot lead an offensive with one battalion of Neustroev. He says that there are only 75 people left in this battalion. So you have to storm the Reichstag. Prepare for the assault. Neustroev will help you.

On the way to my observation post, through cellars and through gaps in the walls of houses, I went to see what the situation was like in Zinchenko's regiment, whether it was possible to count on his help. Zinchenko's regiment was really badly battered. The soldiers who remained in the ranks (there were few of them) settled down in the rooms of a large building on the banks of the Spree. In one of the rooms I found Zinchenko. He stood near the bunk with an unlit pipe in his mouth. After saying hello, I asked:

- Shall we storm the Reichstag?

He cursed hard and replied:

- What will I attack with? The remnants of Neustroev's battalion? No, buddy, go ahead.

I said goodbye and left.

Knowing that the Zinchenko regiment will not participate in the attack, but

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the banner of the Military Council is there, I told Lieutenant Sorokin and the party organizer of the unit Viktor Pravotorov, who were with me at that time, to prepare the Red Banner for hoisting on the Reichstag.

The scouts were delighted, excited. Soon they got hold of a featherbed somewhere and brought two captured generals. Here, at the observation post, the feather bed was gutted. Someone brought something that looked like a pole. They cut him with daggers. The banner turned out to be rough, but strong and large.

Having handed over the Red Banner to the scouts, I set the task of hoisting it on the roof, near the sculptural group."

By morning, after a hard battle, the Soviet infantry had captured a large center of resistance - the house where the Ministry of the Interior and the Swiss embassy were located; everyone called it "Himmler's house".

The losses were indeed great. There were 30-40 people in the companies. The last additions to the divisions of the 79th Rifle Corps were former prisoners of the Moabit prison.

By noon, parts of the corps took up their original positions in order to capture the Reichstag and adjacent buildings. The 207th Rifle Division was supposed to take the Opera House, from where flanking fire was fired. Part of the units advanced to Königplatz, to the water-filled moat that crossed the square. The main forces of the first echelon took their places at the windows in the Himmler House.

At noon, after a strong artillery preparation, the battalions rushed to the assault. An hour and a half later, having crossed the ditch, under the cover of artillery fire and smoke bombs, groups from the 1st battalion of the 380th regiment of captain K.Ya. Samsonov, 1st battalion of the 674th regiment of captain V.I. Davydov and the 1st battalion of the 756th regiment of captain S.A. Neustroeva. General Shatilov reported: "A group of daredevils 756 joint ventures hoisted a banner on the first floor in the southwestern part of the Reichstag at 13.45 on 30.04.45, 674 joint ventures - at 14.25 on 30.04. 45 in the northern part of the western facade of the building ... The Reichstag was taken 1/674 and 1/756 joint ventures. Later in his memoirs

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the general will write: "The first to be in full force were the company of Pyotr Grechenkov, the group of scouts of Lieutenant Sorokin and the company of Ilya Syanov."

The names of the daredevils from Sorokin's platoon are known: senior sergeants Lysenko, Oreshko, Pravotorov, Red Army soldiers Bulatov, Bryukhovetsky, Pochkovsky.

Viktor Pravotorov recalled: "We find a window. Seizing the moment, climbed out the window, after throwing a grenade there. We went through the corridors to the stairs, climbed to the second floor. Here Bulatov and I approached the broken window, looked at the Royal Square, behind which our soldiers lay down in the houses and right on the streets, preparing for a decisive assault. Grisha Bulatov put the banner through the window, waved it, then we strengthened it. At this time they heard below

shots, grenade explosions, the sound of boots. We prepared for battle. Grenades and machine guns are on the alert. But the fight did not take place. It was in our footsteps that Lysenko, Bryukhovetsky, Oreshko, Pochkovsky came. Lieutenant Sorokin is with them.

"It's hard to see it from here, guys," he said. - We need to get to the roof.

On the same stairs they began to climb higher and higher and found an exit to the roof. The goal has been reached. Where to put the banner? We decided to strengthen the sculptural group. We seat Grisha Bulatov, and our youngest scout ties the flag to the neck of a huge horse. We looked at the clock: the hands showed 14 hours 35 minutes.

(Regarding the clock. On the Moltke Bridge stood "an unshaven soldier in a padded jacket" and handed a Swiss watch to everyone moving towards the Reichstag: "So that, therefore, the time of our assault will be forever remembered.")

The main forces of the 150th Rifle Division were cut off from the Reichstag by heavy fire from Karlstrasse and from the Brandenburg Gate.

From the notes of Lieutenant Colonel A.D. Plekhodanov:

"A few minutes later, a brave handful of soldiers from the company of Lieutenant Grechenkov and scouts from Sorokin's platoon reached the main entrance to the Reichstag and hid in it. Rest

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were cut off. Some of them lay down on the square, others retreated back.

What was at that time in the Reichstag, I did not know. The fate of the daredevils who burst into it was also unknown. And suddenly I heard the joyful cry of my messenger:

- Comrade Lieutenant Colonel! Look at the roof of the Reichstag. That's where the rider rises!

I raised my binoculars and saw the Red Banner, and next to it, two tiny figures were moving. It was at 2:25 p.m. As I found out later, the moving figures were Sergeant Pravotorov and Private Bulatov.

It is difficult to convey the feeling of joy and pride that filled my heart at that moment. This banner was soon seen by the soldiers of other parts of the division. The fire on the Reichstag and other enemy firing points increased with renewed vigor.

At this time, the division commander V. Shatilov called me and asked what the situation was. I reported: some of the soldiers from Davydov's battalion and the regimental intelligence platoon had penetrated the Reichstag. The rest stepped back. Many lay down on the Royal Square.

- Do you have a connection with those who are in the Reichstag? asked the DIVISION COMMANDER.

"No," I replied. But you don't have to worry about them. They have already penetrated the roof and hoisted the Red Banner of Victory there.

- What flag? the general was surprised. - After all, it is in Zinchenko's headquarters.

"The banner of my scouts. Homemade. They prepared it before the assault.

At about 4 pm, when the fire had subsided somewhat, Colonel Zinchenko came to my NP with a telephone over his shoulder. He was not alone, with his fighting girlfriend Zina. They brought a bottle of champagne and a cake. They congratulated me on my victory.

Soon V. Shatilov called me again. He ordered to prepare for the third attack, asked if I could move my observation post to the Reichstag during the new assault. I answered,

what to do is still too early. Right attack

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the Germans are in tanks, to the left - their artillery pieces are beating. And in general, the entire area in front of the Reichstag is heavily shot through. And if I manage to transfer my NP to the Reichstag, then it will be impossible to direct the battle. We may be cut off and lose the Reichstag. In conclusion, I suggested to the general to send Zinchenko there, I said that he was with me at the OP. The general asked to pass the phone.

Having finished the conversation with V. Shatilov, Zinchenko said with displeasure:

"The old man is worried about the banner of the War Council. He says that commander Perevertkin does not give rest, all the time he asks about the banner of the Military Council of the Army. Orders to bring him back.

I told Zinchenko that one should not be offended, one should sneak into the Reichstag, that there is no army, there is no one to lead, and sitting on my NP is inconvenient.

The hoisting of the flag over the Reichstag was immediately reported to the front headquarters. General Kuznetsov signed the order at 16:00: "Today at 2:25 pm, units of Major General Perevertkin, Colonel Negoda, Major General Shatilov, after a fierce stubborn battle, stormed the Reichstag building in Berlin and hoisted the proud flag of the Soviet Union over it. The stronghold of German fascism has been destroyed." A similar order was issued by the Military Council of the 1st Belorussian Front. Finally, the Soviet Information Bureau conveyed the good news to all Soviet citizens: "Today at fourteen o'clock, Soviet soldiers captured the building of the German Reichstag and hoisted the banner of victory on it."

After the German counterattacks from the flanks were beaten off, the Soviet infantry at 1800 rushed to the main entrance of the Reichstag. More and more groups made their way into the building. With the introduction of the second echelons, its fate was finally decided. The floors of the building were mostly cleared of the enemy, the stairs were blocked, the remnants of the garrison were driven into the cellars. Around 18.30 a group of soldiers of the J-th battalion of the 756th rifle regiment under the command of Captain V.N. Makova - sergeants G.K. Zagitov, A.F. Lisimenko, M.P. Minin also went up to the roof and fastened the flag to the front.

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tone. An hour later, Colonel Zinchenko arrived, established contact with the division commander, and was appointed by him commandant of the Reichstag.

According to eyewitnesses, Lieutenant Sorokin, seeing the telephone, asked permission to call and, being admitted to the apparatus, began to report to Plekhodanov that the Banner of Victory was hoisted on the roof of the Reichstag. At that moment, Colonel Zinchenko snatched the handset from the lieutenant and "hit him on the head with all his might."

An intense drama ensued. A stupid "feather-bed" without a star, sickle and hammer was still fluttering on the building, and Banner No. 5 - "a red flag measuring 188 by 82 cm" with all the necessary paraphernalia - was no one knows where. Just like those attached to it standard bearers:

"Toli in the heat of battle, or without attaching special importance to this issue, but everyone somehow forgot about the banner of the Military Council. It must be because the banner of my scouts was already on the roof. They only caught up late at night. By order of Zinchenko (and Zinchenko acted on the orders of V. Shatilov), a group of fighters was assigned to urgently search for Yegorov and Kantaria. They were not found soon, by the dawn of the First of May, somewhere in the wagon train of the 756th regiment. But the banner of the Military Council was no longer with them. Then Zinchenko got a new banner somewhere, handed it to Yegorov and Kantaria, surrounded them just in case, so that they would not be "lost" again, with machine gunners and ordered them to rise

up and install somewhere on the roof, but, of course, not on the dome, because it was broken, and one part of it collapsed. They did just that."

Thus, the brave scouts "took the Reichstag" much later than their regimental commander!

From the memoirs of V.N. Pravotorova: "Late at night we met with infantrymen from another regiment - Yegorov and Kantaria. Accompanied by a group of machine gunners, they carried the banner of the Military Council of the Army. Egorov turned to us:

Help me out, comrades. How to get to the roof?

We showed them the way, together with them we went up to the roof. Here, next to our flag, at the sculptural group, we helped the infantry to strengthen the banner of the Military Council on

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neck of the army. It was at the dawn of our bright holiday of the First of May...

I personally have no complaints against Yegorov and Kantaria. Nice guys. They didn't take credit for anything. It is not their fault that they were artificially made heroes. And they are by no means impostors. On the contrary, humble boys. I remember that we, scouts, stood by the horses on the roof of the Reichstag and saluted the Banner of Victory. At this time, photojournalists and cameramen are filming us. Egorov and Kantaria stand aside. I shout to them:

-Come on guys, join us!

They are out of place. They smile. And Kantaria replies with an accent:

We don't need someone else's glory.

So, Kantaria and Yegorov were invited to join the group of warriors saluting the Banner. and they, showing then the modesty of a soldier, refused. But their commander, Captain Neustroev, who was not invited, acted differently. He said:

- Guys, can I take a picture with you?

- Get up. What we are sorry.

We were in a great mood."

Separate groups of the enemy, who had settled in the compartments of the cellars, continued to shoot back and capitulated only on the night of May 2. Soviet soldiers with stones and pencils, bayonets and penknives selflessly wrote their names on the walls. Left his "calling card" and Viktor Pravotorov: "Know ours. We are from Donbass, from Makiivka".

In the award list drawn up in hot pursuit for the title of Hero of the Soviet Union, A.D. Plekhoda-newly written:

"674 SP was the first to break into the capital of Nazi Germany — Berlin and successfully fought street battles. The personnel of the regiment showed true military prowess in forcing two channels. In stubborn battles, he captured several streets of Berlin and its suburbs, and also captured a number of

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German defense factories and safes with a stock of gold and silver, 46 kg of gold and over 20 tons of silver.

On April 30, 1945, the PLEKHODANOV regiment, after two days of fierce fighting, captured the Reichstag by the first assault and captured 2 generals.

Lieutenant Sorokin was introduced to the title of Hero:

"He, with his reconnaissance platoon 674 SR, on 30.4.45 at 14.25 hoisted the Banner of Victory over the Reichstag."

And heroic lists were signed for five scouts in the corps and the army. But none of them received Gold Stars.

Rewriting history whitewashed and sculpting the legend began almost immediately.

The main heroes of the assault on the Reichstag were sergeants Yegorov and Kantaria, who hoisted a "real banner" on the very dome, as well as their direct superiors, the battalion commander Neustroev and the Zinchenko regiment. After all, it was not for nothing that the political department chose "brave scouts" for the honorary mission: Georgians and a natural hare - this should please Comrade Stalin.

To begin with, the 171st Rifle Division was "removed" from participating in the assault on the Reichstag. Then they forgot about the 674th regiment: Sorokin's soldiers, it turns out, set up their banner only in the window of the second floor. And in general, "the entire Reichstag was in red flags, and the official banner was one."

From Plekhodanov's notes:

"After Victory Day, our regiment, having completed the assigned task, returned to its division. Soon, in honor of the heroes of the assault on the Reichstag, the corps command decided to arrange a banquet. It was at Goering's dacha. The corps commander, looking at a piece of paper, proclaimed a toast, naming the division commander V. Shatilov, soldiers of the 756th regiment: F. Zinchenko, S. Neustroev, I. Syanov, Berest, Egorov, Kantaria. And then he just mentioned me, my political deputy Subbotin, battalion commander Davydov, company commander Grechenkov. Then the doctor of the medical unit R. Drozdova got up from the table, who knew perfectly well who stormed the Reichstag, who was the first to enter there and hoisted the Banner of Victory. She said:

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- So these are all the heroes of the storming of the Reichstag? Excuse me, but where are the rest of the heroes and, in particular, the scouts of the 674th regiment, who were the first to break into the Reichstag and hoist the Banner of Victory on it?

"Only officers are invited to the banquet," answered V. Shatilov.

"I see Noah over there, Yegorov and Kantaria. What do they have to do with the Banner of Victory? To be honest, I have more right to it. During all three assaults on the Reichstag, I was on the NP of the Plekhodanov regiment. Together with Plekhodan, she entered the Reichstag. And Egorov and Kantaria came there many hours later than me. Moreover, in addition to that - under protection.

There was confusion among those assembled. People began to exchange glances and whisper. A scandal was brewing. To avoid him, we officers of the 674th Regiment went home. The banquet failed...

I will not forget the day when the division selected soldiers for Moscow to participate in the first parade in honor of the victory over fascist Germany. Everything was done quietly, covertly and in a hurry. I remember that V. Shatilov then selected Syanov, Yegorov, Kantaria and someone else from the Zinchenko regiment, several soldiers from other parts of the division. And in retaliation to us, not a single representative of the 674th regiment who took the Reichstag!

The next step was an attempt to put the standard-bearers in the ranks of the first echelon, so that the time of accomplishment of the "feat" did not differ from the reports and combat logs. Yes, June 3rd

In 1945, the head of the political department of the 3rd shock army, Colonel F.Ya. Lisitsyn compiled an extensive report addressed to the head of the political department of the 1st Belorussian Front, in which he described in detail the circumstances and participants in the hoisting of the banner of Victory over the Reichstag:

"After a fierce bloody battle, the battalion of Captain Neustroev broke into the Reichstag. Almost at the same time, advancing from the north and east, the battalions of Major Davydov (674th regiment of 150th division) and Captain Samsonov (380th division of 171th division) broke into the Reichstag...

Nothing could stop Neustroev and his warriors. Fighters

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they skillfully maneuvered in the intricate labyrinth of corridors and rooms, beat the Germans with mortal combat. At this time, the soldiers of the 1st rifle company ml. Sergeant Kantaria Melton Varlamovich, Red Army soldier Yegorov Mikhail Alekseevich and deputy battalion commander for political affairs, Lieutenant Aleksey Prokopevich Berest, fought their way to the dome, the highest point of the Reichstag building, and hoisted the Banner of Victory on it.

So on April 30, at 14.25 minutes, the Red Banner, the Banner of Victory, hoisted by our brave men, hoisted over Berlin.

By decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR dated May 31, 1945, Colonel Zinchenko was awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union. May 8, 1946 Egorov, Kantaria, battalion commander Samsonov became Heroes. Sorokin's scouts were given the Order of the Red Banner. However, they don't seem to have received it either. In any case, Pavel Bryukhovetsky went to civilian life with two medals: "For the capture of Berlin" and "For the victory over Germany"

The highest opinion was taken into account, and on May 9, 1946, the Pravda newspaper published an article by I. Zolin:

"The first to break into the Reichstag were regimental scouts Mikhail Yegorov and Militon Kantaria... They climbed higher and higher until they reached the dome and hoisted the Banner. It was April 30 at 2:25 pm.

Then, the time of hoisting the banner began to be drawn to the moment of the actual appearance of Yegorov and Kantaria in the Reichstag, and on April 30, 1965, the Pravda newspaper (!) reported that Kantaria and Yegorov installed the Banner in the morning | May. General Shatilov gave the following interview to Literaturnaya Gazeta: "The Victory Banner has been hoisted on the dome of the Reichstag. It was April 30 at 22:50. If he meant the banner of the Military Council, then there is no contradiction here. In his other memoirs, the general wrote quite clearly: "At first it appeared on the first floor, but the battle continued in the Reichstag building itself to clear the floors, and only by 22.00 was this banner placed on the uppermost dome."

In Shatilov's memoirs, the feat of the scouts is already presented in all its glory:

"Egorov and Kantaria under the guise of the Beresta pro group

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had to make their way to the upper floors. Suddenly, the stone staircase broke — the whole march turned out to be broken (Nonsense! What does it mean to write about something that I myself have not seen. For example, I climbed the roof of the Reichstag along a completely intact staircase. — A.D. Plekhodanov). The confusion was short-lived. "Me now!" Kantaria shouted and rushed down somewhere (An amazing oversight of the guards: did she forget her duties? - A.D. Plekhodanov). Soon he appeared with a wooden step-ladder (the author forgot that he was writing about the Reichstaeg, and not about a warehouse with various rubbish. - A.D. Plekhodanov). And again the fighters stubbornly climbed up.

Here is the roof. They walked along it to a huge rider. Beneath them lay houses shrouded in smoky twilight. There were flashes all around. Shards rattled on the roof. Where to put the flag? Near the statue? No, it doesn't fit. After all, it was said - on the dome. The staircase leading to it staggered - it was broken in several places.

Then the fighters climbed along the rare ribs of the frame, exposed from under the broken glass. Moving was difficult and scary. They climbed slowly, one after another, clinging to the iron with a death grip. Finally reached the upper platform. They fastened the Banner to the metal crossbar with a belt - and down the same way. The return journey was even more difficult and took longer. |

When Yegorov and Kantaria appeared before Neustroev, the clock was ten minutes to eleven in the evening. And five minutes later, Zinchenko solemnly reported to me by phone:

"Comrade General, the Banner of the Military Council is fixed on the dome of the Reichstag at twenty-one hours and fifty minutes Moscow time!"

Colonel Zinchenko did even better. He suddenly remembered that in fact the day attack was unsuccessful, no one broke into the Reichstag, "the units did not advance a meter", all reports and reports were the result of someone (?) unreliable report. Well, then, as written: "Yegorov and Kantaria with the banner run to the Reichstag ... Enemy bullets whistled around, one of them pierced the flagpole, splitting it. Yegorov's trousers were shot through,

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Kantaria has a cap. But even at that moment they did not flinch, did not retreat, courageously passed these last meters and PERFORMED THEIR DUTY.

In response, Colonel Plekhodanov wrote an article in 1966 entitled "How the scam of the century happened":

"After demobilization from the Soviet Army, and especially in recent years, when the cult of personality was debunked, the participants in the storming of the Reichstag and hoisting the Banner of Victory on it repeatedly applied (in writing and orally) to various authorities with a request to help sort out, install new truth in the matter of hoisting the Banner of Victory.

They unanimously declared that Yegorov and Kantaria had nothing to do with the hoisting of the Banner. Moreover, they lost the banner of the Military Council of the Army, handed to them, shamefully fled from the battlefield. These unfortunate warriors came to the Reichstag, as they say, for a hat analysis, when the Banner of Victory fluttered on it for almost a day, and they came accompanied by a group of machine gunners. Real heroes supported all their statements with convincing and irrefutable evidence...

All this seven scouts and their fighting friends have repeatedly told responsible comrades who are trying to drown their feat in mass heroism. However, nowhere and never did they receive an intelligible answer. Promised before the assault on the Reichstag on behalf of the High Command, the highest government awards for hoisting the Banner of Victory remained undelivered more than 20 years after the end of the war.

And at the same time, mocking these heroes, for two decades now they have been honoring those who fled from the battlefield, who have nothing to do with taking the Reichstag and hoisting the Banner of Victory on it. Who needs this lie, what purpose does it serve? It's time to put this falsification end".

The article, of course, was not published. Shatilov and Zinchenko wrote about "uncleanliness" and distortion of facts (to Stalin, in the newspapers Pravda, Izvestia, Moskovsky Komsomolets, in the Politburo of the Central Committee of the CPSU, the Presidium of the Supreme Council, writers S.S. Smirnov and M. A. Sholokhov)

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Live participants in the events: Viktor Pravotorov, Semyon Sorokin, Ivan Lysenko, Grigory Bulatov, Mikhail Minin, but lost the combat against the system. Under Stalin, they were summoned to an intimate conversation in the district committee, they were given party penalties and hinted at unenviable prospects; under Khrushchev and Brezhnev they were sent to the Institute of Marxism-Leninism. Probably today, if they were alive, they would be called "detractors of history."

Retired lieutenant colonel Neustroev (by the way, why is the forty-year-old lieutenant colonel retired. I am a lieutenant commander and almost ten years older, but I am in the reserve. Evil tongues write that Stepan Andreevich drank away his Zvezda, and Shatalin procured for its duplicate) for many years traveled around the country with lectures, preached the official version, but at the dawn of perestroika he decided to discover the "truth". Neustroev simultaneously confirmed Zinchenko's assertion that the assault took place at 18:00, and Plekhodanov's assertion that Yegorov and Kantaria had arrived for the hat-check. But on the other hand, and this fact does not allow us to take the memories seriously, Neustroev's battalion independently captured the Reichstag, while Samsonov's and Davydov's battalions repelled attacks "from right and left" until late at night, not reaching the Reichstag "one hundred - one hundred fifty meters.

So it turns out that we are still storming the Reichstag.

Another anecdote is connected with this banner. On May 9, by order of the commander of the 79th Rifle Corps, the Victory Banner was removed from the roof of the Reichstag and replaced with a "large scarlet banner." General Perevertkin got excited about the idea of personally presenting the victory banner to "our great leader, beloved Marshal Iosif Vissarionovich Stalin." In mid-May, a representative of the Central Artillery Museum of the Red Army approached the commandant of Berlin, General Berzarin, with a proposal to transfer the banner to the museum he represented. The general liked the idea, and on May 20, on this occasion, a parade of units of the 5th shock army took place with a solemn ceremony of handing over the banner. TASS and Krasnaya Zvezda correspondents covered with due pomp

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being. Two days later, it turned out that the "large scarlet banner" had gone to Moscow for eternal storage, and the original Banner was kept at the headquarters of the 3rd Guards Army. All in all, it didn't work out well.

On April 30, at about 3:30 p.m., Adolf Hitler shot himself. The corpse was wrapped in a blanket, taken out to the garden of the Imperial Chancellery, doused with gasoline and burned. Stalin was slightly upset: "It is a pity that we could not take him alive." Having already identified the remains, Soviet experts, in order to please the Leader, write that the Führer was a drug addict, a psychopath, an identical impotent and was poisoned by "rat poison".

At 3 am on May 1, the Chief of the General Staff of the OKH, General Krebs, with accompanying persons, by agreement with the Soviet command, crossed the front line and arrived at the headquarters of General Chuikov. Krebs reported on Hitler's suicide, handed over a list of members of the new imperial government and the High Command, as well as an appeal from the newly minted Reich Chancellor Goebbels to Comrade Stalin: "I am authorized by Bormann to establish contact with the leader of the Soviet people. This connection is necessary for peace negotiations between the powers that have the greatest losses. Grand Admiral Dennitz became President of the Reich, and Field Marshal Schöner became Commander-in-Chief of the Ground Forces. The meaning of the Goebbels-Bormann proposals was that Joseph Vissarionovich, in accordance with Hitler's will (!), should recognize the "legal" Nazi (!!!) government and sit down with him at the negotiating table. At the same time, take the necessary measures so that no other "illegal" government appears. Otherwise, there will be no order!

The Kremlin's answer was simple: no truce, immediate and unconditional surrender of the garrison. Krebs left without salty slurping ..

Fruitless conversations at the headquarters of the 8th Guards Army had no effect on the intensity of the fighting in Berlin. The assault continued. Two tank and three combined-arms armies huddled in the center of the city:

"The command was given: fire at full

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power and finish off the enemy faster! Berlin rumbles and groans from gunshots and explosions. Another breakthrough is needed..." General Sokolovsky noted: "The heap of equipment often did not allow bringing the necessary heavy calibers to firing positions. It was necessary to give a special order to withdraw from the combat formations of troops unnecessary for battle (!) small-caliber artillery, including 76-mm guns."

Marshal Zhukov still had the hope of giving the Soviet people a holiday gift for May Day.

However, at 18:00 the Germans rejected the demand for surrender. At the last meeting in the bunker, Goebbels declared: "The Führer forbade capitulation." Then General Krebs put a bullet in his forehead. Goebbels poisoned himself, Bormann evaporated. General Weidling gave the order to subordinate units, "whoever can and wants to, let them make their way, the rest to lay down their arms." And Zhukov gave General Bogdanov a scolding:

"The units of the 2nd [Guards] Tank Army are conducting the offensive extremely poorly. Over the past 3 days, the army has no results at all. I have to strictly warn you personally and demand:

1. Organize a better fight than you have organized so far.
2. Get out of the basements and see the battle in person.
3. Prepare three or four tank brigades and, with the false command of brigade commanders, break through the brigades behind enemy lines. Behind the brigades, send the main forces of the corps and the army.
4. Show more determination. The actions of the 12th shopping mall should be linked with the actions of aviation."

Reich President Dennitz turned to the Wehrmacht with the words: "The Fuhrer is dead. Obsessed with the great idea of saving Europe from Bolshevism, he devoted his whole life to it and died a heroic death. In his face, one of the greatest men in German history passed away. With the greatest respect and mourning, we bow our banners before him ... I take command of all branches of the armed forces with a firm desire to continue the fight against Bolshevism until hundreds of thousands of soldiers and civilians are saved from slavery and destruction. against the British and

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Americans, I will be forced to continue the fight until they stop preventing me from fighting Bolshevism.

On the night of May 2, Weidling, through truce, announced to the Soviet command about the surrender of the 56th tank corps. At 6 o'clock, having crossed the front line in the zone of the 8th Guards Army, he surrendered. During interrogation, the general testified: "Berlin had stocks of food and ammunition for 30 days, but the warehouses were located on the outskirts, there was almost no ammunition or food in the center, and the more the ring of Russian troops around the defenders narrowed, the harder the situation with ammunition and food was becoming, and for the last couple of days we were almost left without one or the other."

Soon Weidling issued an order to the troops to cease resistance and lay down their arms. Somewhat later, a similar order on behalf of the "provisional imperial government" was signed by Deputy Minister of Propaganda Hans Fritzsche, who also announced the suicide of his boss.

It was at this moment that Chuikov, who was knocked down from fatigue and lack of sleep, was stunned by the thought: "This is already the end of the war."

In fact, the surrender has already begun. However, due to the fact that the control of the German troops in Berlin was paralyzed, the orders of Weidling and Fritzsche could not be brought to all units. Therefore, individual battle groups continued to resist and tried to break out of the city to the west. Only after the announcement of the order on the radio did mass capitulation begin. By evening, organized resistance had ceased, and 70,000 soldiers and officers were taken prisoner. According to Soviet intelligence, approximately 15-17 thousand people managed to escape from the city: "The exit from the encirclement and the withdrawal from the city for the most part of the groups was carried out through the subway tunnels to the Reichssportmelde stadium, from where the groups moved along various routes." Wenk's army began to retreat to the Elbe to surrender to the allies.

Satisfied with the ruins of Berlin, General Katukov wrote to correspondent Yuri Zhukov: "We finished him off. He

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will envy Orel, Sevastopol and a number of other cities - this is how we processed it.

In Western Pomerania and Mecklenburg, a successful offensive was launched by the troops of the 2nd Belorussian Front. By the end of May 2, they reached the coast of the Baltic Sea, and the next day, advancing to the line Wismar Schwerin-Elbe River, they established contact with the 2nd British Army. K. On May 7, the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front, advancing in a westerly direction, reached the Elbe on a wide front.

The Berlin offensive operation ended on May 8, 1945. With the fall of the capital - "the center of German imperialism and the seat of German aggression" - the Third Reich lost all possibility of conducting an organized armed struggle. During the operation, 480 thousand enemy soldiers and officers were taken prisoner, up to 1] thousand guns and mortars, more than 1.5 thousand tanks and self-propelled guns, 4.5 thousand aircraft were captured as trophies.

The defenders of Berlin fought to the end. The degree of fierceness of the fighting is evidenced by the heavy losses of three fronts. Even according to the most official data, without taking into account the two Polish armies, they amounted to 352 thousand people, of which irrevocably - 78 thousand (according to other sources, more than 102 thousand), 2108 guns and mortars, 917 aircraft, 1997 tanks and self-propelled guns. In terms of the intensity of the average daily losses - 15,335 people - the Berlin operation surpasses the bloodiest battles of the summer of 1943. It is clear that the 1st Byelorussian Front had the hardest time of all, from which almost 180 thousand were killed and wounded - 20% of the original composition; 916 units of armored vehicles burned down - 30%.

Regarding the introduction of two tank armies into the German capital, there are two opposing opinions, which in fact do not contradict each other.

Marshal Vasilevsky: "The experience of this operation once again convincingly proved the inexpediency of using large tank formations in a battle for a large settlement: they lose their main advantages here - striking power and maneuverability."

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Marshal of the Armored Forces Babazhdanyan: "Strict scientific objectivity will force us to admit that if in the Vistula-Oder operation the tanks introduced into the so-called clean breakthrough, from the very first day received wide scope for swift actions, which brought victory to the Red Army, and glory to them, then in the Berlin operation the tank armies were, alas, not used in the best way. Their direct introduction into the breakthrough, their blow to the forehead of the enemy's defense, when they, together with the combined arms armies, together with the infantry, attack the enemy's defensive lines one after another — all this does not correspond to the real purpose of large tank formations, which are tank formations. army.

We are not talking about tanks for direct support of infantry and not about tanks of individual tank brigades attached to combined arms armies, which, as a rule, act in the same way as the first ones, but about large tank formations designed to develop the success of the offensive

The Berlin operation was an offensive one, and the tank armies, large tank formations, acting here, in essence, as tanks of direct infantry support, suffered significant losses. The only argument in favor of the same use in the storming of Berlin is that this is the final scene of the war, after which the curtain should immediately fall - the surrender of the enemy.

A different point of view is shared by those who directly brought tanks into the streets of the metropolis, for example, Marshal of the Armored Forces Rybalko: "The current operational, strategic and political situation in the final stage of the war required a quick capture of the German capital. With the fall of Berlin, the collapse of Germany, the demoralization of its army and the inevitable capitulation were foreseen. In these circumstances, the use of a tank army for direct combat inside a large city was dictated by necessity. The shackling of the most valuable qualities of tank and mechanized troops - mobility, the use of such troops in conditions where they cannot fully use their combat capabilities - fire to the limit

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the dance and power of the ramming strike are justified by the importance of the operation and its decisive results.

Or Marshal of the Armored Forces Bogdanov: "The Berlin operation showed that tank armies can independently fight in such a large city as Berlin. Marshal of the Soviet Union Com. Zhukov showed how to use and use tank armies at various stages of the war. If in the Warsaw-Poznan operation tank armies flowed around large cities or surrounded them until the infantry approached, then in the Berlin operation, Berlin, which was the ultimate goal not only of the operation, but also the ultimate goal of the war, the tank armies had to take on their own, on - on a par with infantry armies, independently conduct street battles in the city.

That is, in principle, it is impossible. But if you really want to, then you can and even need to (guided by such "tactical principles", did the Russian General Staff plan the assault on Grozny?). True, Rybalko and Bogdanov expressed their views in 1946 and reinforced their arguments with the opinion of Comrade Stalin, who "directly supervised the operation" and demanded "decisive action" in order to quickly complete it.

Hitler was alive when, according to Konev, a call came from Headquarters: "Stalin asked: "Who do you think will take Prague?" The question is rhetorical. As early as April 24, the Soviet General Staff sent a message to the Allied military missions in Moscow:

"Please inform General Eisenhower that the plan of the Soviet Supreme High Command for the near future provides for the occupation of Berlin, the clearing of the enemy of the entire eastern bank of the Elbe River north and south of Berlin, as well as the Vltava River valley, where, according to our information, the Germans concentrate significant forces.

This meant that Prague would be taken by the Red Army, and Czechoslovakia, like Poland, Romania, Hungary, was awaiting "revolutionary transformations" and the prospects for "socialist

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construction" under the close tutelage of Moscow. The British believed that even a temporary occupation of the territory of Czechoslovakia by the Allied troops would have important political consequences, and they persuaded the Americans to move to Prague.

In a telegram to Truman on April 30, Churchill wrote: "There can be little doubt that the liberation by your troops of Prague and as much of Western Czechoslovakia as possible can completely change the post-war situation in Czechoslovakia and have a great influence on the situation in neighboring countries. On the other hand, if the Western allies do not take an active part in the liberation of Czechoslovakia, this country will suffer the fate of Yugoslavia.

However, the Americans, "in their youth", did not understand anything in geopolitics. Truman reacted coldly to Churchill's letter, while Marshall warned Eisenhower not to "put the lives of American soldiers at risk for purely political gain." The general replied: "I will not take any action not based on military considerations, unless I receive a special order to do so from the Joint Chiefs of Staff." Curiously, did Eisenhower realize his mistake by becoming President of the United States?

| In May, Marshal Konev received a directive to prepare the troops of the right wing of the 1st Ukrainian Front for a "rapid offensive" on Prague. The next day, the commander of the 4th Ukrainian Front, General A.I. Eremenko, who finally captured Moravska-Ostrava, received an order to strike in a westerly direction with the task of capturing Prague no later than May 12-14.

Meanwhile, the 3rd and 1st American armies entered the borders of Austria and Czechoslovakia, they had about 100 kilometers to go to Prague, the Russians - one and a half times more. On May 4, Eisenhower, turning to the Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army, proposed to develop the offensive of the American troops to the western banks of the Vltava and Elbe, that is, to occupy Prague and the surrounding areas. General A.I. Antonov replied that the Red Army would cope with

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this task, for which "an appropriate regrouping" has already been made, and expressed the hope that Eisenhower will fulfill his wish "regarding the suspension of the offensive of his forces in Czechoslovakia."

Upon receiving the letter, Eisenhower ordered the 12th Army Group to be stopped on the Karlovy Vary-Pilsen-Ceske Budejovice line.

The general plan of the Prague operation, in which troops of the 1st, 4th and 2nd Ukrainian fronts took part, was to encircle, dismember and in a short time to defeat the German forces on the territory of Czechoslovakia, to prevent their withdrawal to the west and southwest.

Marshal Konev decided to deliver the main blow with the forces of the 13th, 3rd and 5th guards, 4th and 3rd guards tank armies, two tank and cavalry corps from the Rize area along the banks of the Elbe and Vltava in the general direction to Prague. On the third day of the operation, the front was to strike the second blow in order to cut the enemy grouping from the area northwest of Görlitz with the forces of the 28th and 52nd armies, as well as the mechanized corps in the general direction to Zittau, Mlada Boleslav, Prague. The third blow around Dresden from the southeast was delivered by the 2nd Army of the Polish Army. The average daily rate of advance was planned to be 20-25 kilometers.

By decision of Marshal Malinovsky, the main attack on the 2nd Ukrainian Front was planned to be delivered by the forces of the 7th Guards and 6th Guards Tank Armies. Two days later, the 9th Guards Army was to go on the offensive to the left of the shock group, and the 53rd Army, with two corps of the Romanian I Army and the 1st Guards Cavalry Mechanized Group, operationally subordinated to it, was to go on the offensive. The 40th Army, together with the 4th Romanian Army, was to advance on Olomouc.

General Eremenko continued to carry out the task of eliminating the Olomouc grouping of the enemy, opening

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thus, the troops of the 4th Ukrainian Front had a road to Prague from the east.

By the beginning of May, on the 1220-kilometer front, from Potsdam to the Danube, as part of three Ukrainian fronts, there were 20 combined arms, 3 tank and 3 air armies, a cavalry mechanized group, as well as 5 tank, mechanized and cavalry corps - 170 divisions. In total, more than 2 million people, more than 27 thousand guns and mortars, 1800 tanks and self-propelled guns, 2942 combat aircraft were involved in the operation. The start of the offensive was scheduled for 7

May.

The troops of Field Marshal Schörner's Army Group Center (4th Panzer, 17th, | th Panzer Armies) and part of the forces of General Rendulich's Army Group Austria (8th Army) acted against them. The total number of the German group in Czechoslovakia reached 900 thousand people, armed with 9700 guns and mortars, 1900 tanks and 1000 aircraft. They relied on a powerful defense prepared in advance and were quite combat-ready.

The Dönitz government, located in Flensburg, was well aware of the hopelessness of the martial law, but harbored the hope, by delaying the advance of Soviet troops to the west, to conclude a truce with the allies and withdraw the maximum number of soldiers of the Eastern Front to the Anglo-American zone of occupation. On May 3, a delegation led by Admiral Hans von Friedeburg went to the headquarters of Montgomery for negotiations, and on May 4, a document was signed there on the surrender of all German forces in Holland, in northwestern Germany, in Schleswig and Denmark. Then Friedeburg arrived in Reims, at the headquarters of General Eisenhower. Here it was announced to the admiral that the Allies demanded from the German High Command the simultaneous and unconditional surrender of all troops both in the East and in the West.

On May 5, Dönitz delivered a speech in which he declared: "... my first task is to save the Germans from annihilation by the advancing Bolsheviks. It is only in the name of this goal that hostilities continue." The order of the German High Command read: "Laying arms in the North

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West Germany, Denmark and Holland, we proceeded from the fact that the struggle against the Western powers had lost its meaning. In the east, however, the struggle continues." And Field Marshal Scherner also signed the order: "The war is drawing to a close. In accordance with the order of Grand Admiral Dönitz, appointed by the Führer as Head of State and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht, we must continue to fight until the most valuable thing - our people - is safe. After this task, I intend to take you, my soldiers, to your homeland, in units and with your heads held high."

However, the time of the Third Reich has expired. It was not possible to agree on any special terms of surrender exclusively in the west. The wholesale crossing of the Germans into the Wanglo-American zone, with stubborn resistance in the east, already drove a wedge into relations with the Soviet Union. Therefore, Eisenhower took an uncompromising position. The German delegation was informed that if an unconditional surrender was not signed immediately on all fronts, the negotiations would be broken off, the Americans would resume the air war, and through the line of British and American troops "even persons who wish to surrender in solitary order".

On May 7 at 02.40 General Jodl signed the act of surrender of the German armed forces in Reims, which came into force at 23 hours on May 9 CET. From that moment on, not only the conduct of hostilities, but any movement of troops was prohibited, which deprived the German units on the Eastern Front of the opportunity to avoid Russian captivity. On behalf of the Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Expeditionary Forces in Europe, the document was signed by General Bedell Smith. Head of the Soviet military mission, Major General I.A. Susloparov, without waiting for instructions from Moscow, also put his signature, but with the note: "This protocol on military surrender does not exclude the further signing of another, more

act of capitulation of Germany, if any Allied government so declares.

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When congratulations ended and champagne was drunk, a telegram was delivered to Ivan Alekseevich: "Do not sign any documents."

Field Marshal Schörner was informed by Keitel that he had no more than two days to withdraw his troops from the Czech Republic to the west and surrender to the Americans.

But Schermer's troops failed to leave "with their heads held high."

A spontaneous national uprising broke out in the Czech Republic against the German occupation authorities. In Prague, on May 5, the rebels isolated the enemy garrison and captured the most important objects of the city: post office, telegraph, city power plant and most of the bridges over the Vltava River. Barricades were erected in the streets. A struggle also unfolded in the regions adjacent to Prague, in the front-line regions of Moravia, and in the western regions of the Czech Republic. First of all, the Czechs began to rob and kill the Sudeten Germans and the wounded in hospitals; being an "Aryan" became life-threatening. In order to hold the most important communication center necessary for the retreat to the west, the "iron Ferdinand" ordered the uprising in Prague to be suppressed. However, at the request of the representatives of the headquarters of the uprising, the city was taken under protection by the 1st Infantry Division of the ROA under the command of Major General S.K. Bunyachenko. The population greeted the division with enthusiasm, as liberators. The Russians entered the battle with the SS units, showing, as an eyewitness writes, "purely oriental contempt for death." For the Germans, this "misunderstanding" was a big surprise. It is curious that at the same time, the Germans, the Vlasovites, and the Czechs all wanted the Americans to occupy Prague.

On the morning of May 6, reconnaissance in force was carried out in the zone of the shock grouping of the 1st Ukrainian Front, since, due to hasty preparations, even the front line of the enemy's defense was not really known. Reconnaissance showed that the Germans, leaving small forces, were withdrawing in a southerly direction. Marshal Konev decided to immediately develop success

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advanced battalions. In the afternoon, after a short artillery preparation, the armies of Pukhov and Gordov went on the offensive, as well as the 25th and 4th Guards Tank Corps operating in their zones and formations of the tank armies of Lelyushenko and Rybalko. In the evening, the 5th Guards Army of Zhadov entered the battle. By the end of the day, the advance was 23 kilometers, the tanks reached the Dresden-Leipzig motorway. The enemy put up weak resistance in "small scattered groups."

A day later, the 4th Guards Tank and 13th Armies covered another 45 kilometers and reached the northern slopes of the Ore Mountains. The 3rd Guards Army captured the city of Meissen, and the troops of the 3rd Guards Tank and 5th Guards Armies began fighting for Dresden. Dissatisfied with the "slow pace", the front commander ordered the forward detachments from the tank armies to be detached and, "bypassing all the obstacles and centers of resistance of the enemy, move at maximum speeds to Prague".

On May 7, the troops of the center and left wing of the 1st Ukrainian Front went on the offensive. On the same day, the army of the 2nd Ukrainian moved to Prague. The 7th Guards Army broke through the enemy defenses in a 25-kilometer section and advanced 12 kilometers by the end of the day. To build up the strike in the Shumilov zone, the 6th Guards Tank Army of General A.G. was introduced. Kravchenko, and to the left - the 9th Guards Army of General V.V. Glagolev. North of Vienna, the 46th army of General A.V. Petrushevsky.

Nobody in Prague doubted that the Americans would not come. The leadership of the uprising was taken over by the communists and parachuted representatives of the new Czech government, who recommended the "Vlasovites" to surrender to the approaching Red Army. Late in the evening, Bunyachenko ordered his division to cease hostilities and withdraw to the south.

Troops of the 4th Ukrainian Front continued their offensive against Olomouc and liberated it on May 8. The main forces of Yere

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Menko - 60th, 38th, 1st Guards, 18th Army - launched an offensive in the Prague direction.

By the end of May 8, the troops of the right wing of the 1st Ukrainian Front broke the resistance at the turn of the Ore Mountains and entered the territory of Czechoslovakia. The advanced units of the tank armies were located 70-80 kilometers from Prague. The troops of the 3rd and 5th Guards Armies, with the assistance of the 2nd Army of the Polish Army, completely captured Dresden.

On the night of May 9, the 4th and 3rd Guards Tank Armies made an 80-kilometer throw, and at dawn their forward units entered Prague, followed by units of the 3rd Guards and 13th Guards Tank Armies. and armies. On the same day, advanced detachments of the 60th and 38th armies of the 4th Ukrainian Front, including the 1st separate Czechoslovak tank brigade, entered the capital of Czechoslovakia from the east. Units of the 6th Guards Tank Army and the cavalry-mechanized group of the 2nd Ukrainian Front entered the city from the south.

With the withdrawal of Soviet troops to the Prague region, the paths for the possible withdrawal of the main forces of Army Group Center to the west and southwest were cut off. At the same time, the armies of Konev and Malinovsky continued their advance to the west, where they met with American troops.

During the Prague operation, about 860 thousand enemy soldiers and officers were taken prisoner. Soviet losses amounted to 11 thousand killed and 38 thousand wounded, 373 tanks, 1006 guns and mortars, 80 combat aircraft. Schörner's plan to withdraw the troops of Army Group Center behind the American line failed. The field marshal himself got into the "storm" on May 9 and flew to the Alps to lead the defense of the "national fortress". When he reached Kesselring's headquarters, he was convinced that no fortress had ever existed. Staff officers disciplinedly "surrendered" it to the Americans.

I.V. Stalin understood a lot about symbols. The capitulation signed for the USSR by an unknown general could not satisfy the Supreme. General Shtemenko recalls

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meeting in Stalin's office, the whole appearance of which "expressed extreme displeasure":

"The agreement signed in Reims," continued I.V. Stalin - cannot be canceled, but it cannot be recognized either. Surrender must be committed as the most important historical fact and accepted not on the territory of the victors, the place where the fascist aggression came from - in Berlin, and not unilaterally, but necessarily by the High Command of all countries of the anti-Hitler coalition. Let it be signed by one of the leaders of the former fascist state or a whole group of Nazis responsible for all their atrocities against humanity."

With the consent of the Allies, it was decided to consider the act signed in Reims as a "preliminary protocol of surrender", and to carry out its "official ratification" in Berlin. By the Directive of the Headquarters, Deputy Supreme Commander-in-Chief Marshal G.K. Zhukov. A.Ya. flew to Berlin with all the necessary documents. Vyshinsky. Dwight Eisenhower sent his Deputy Air Marshal Tedder to the event. France was represented by General de Tassigny. "From the former leaders" Field Marshal Keitel had to put his signature.

The center of Berlin was badly damaged, so the ceremony took place in Karlhorst, in the canteen of the military engineering school, on May 8 at 23:00 CET. Then a grand banquet took place, which Zhukov recalls with undisguised pleasure: "The festive dinner ended in the morning with songs and dances. Out of competition danced the Soviet generals. I, too, could not resist and, REMEMBERING MY YOUTH, I DANCED the "Russian". They dispersed and dispersed to the sound of cannonade, which was made from all types of weapons on the occasion of the Victory.

Is this the banquet described by the court dancer Borya Sichkin?

"The hero of Stalingrad, General Chuikov, was a legendary and outstanding personality. Despite their fame, in life

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he was a simple, cheerful person. He did not accept conventions. I remember that at that banquet he unbuttoned his tunic, from under which a vest appeared.

The dancing began. A member of the Front's Military Council, Lieutenant General Telegin, danced a Russian dance with a handkerchief in his hand and looked like a collective-farm homosexual.

Zhukov conquered all those present with his professional, fiery Russian dance. It was at the highest level. Zhukov invited General Chuikov to dance. Chuikov in a sailor's T-shirt, huge, with iron teeth, resembled a charming bear. He went out onto the dance floor and suddenly made a "crossover" - a front somersault. A very difficult move! Especially on a slippery parquet floor, plus after two liters of drunk vodka. It looked like a deadly trick, but the general did it flawlessly and caused a storm of applause.

Then Chuikov showed his best side in squats and finished the dance to the applause of the audience. He called me, and we went to the table to finish our drink.

In all countries of the anti-Hitler coalition, May 8 was already officially celebrating the Victory.

In the Soviet Union, it was celebrated on May 9, the day when Comrade Stalin addressed the Soviet people:

"Comrades! Compatriots and compatriots!

The great day of victory over Germany has come. Fascist Germany, brought to its knees by the Red Army and the troops of our allies, recognized itself defeated and declared unconditional surrender.

On May 7, a preliminary protocol of surrender was signed in the city of Reims. On May 8, representatives of the German High Command, in the presence of representatives of the Supreme Command of the Allied Forces and the Supreme High Command of the Soviet Forces, signed the final act of surrender in Berlin, the execution of which began at 24:00 on May 8.

Knowing the wolf habit of the German bosses, who consider treaties and agreements to be an empty piece of paper, we don't have basis

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nia take their word for it. However, this morning, in pursuance of the act of surrender, the German troops began to lay down their arms en masse and surrender to our troops. This is no longer an empty piece of paper. This is the actual surrender of the German Armed Forces. True, one group of German troops in the region of Czechoslovakia is still refusing to surrender. But I hope that the Red Army will be able to bring her to her senses.

Now we can state with full justification that the historic day of the final defeat of Germany, the day of the Great Victory of our people over German imperialism, has arrived.

From now on, the great banner of the freedom of peoples and peace among peoples will fly over Europe...

Comrades! The Great Patriotic War ended with our complete victory. The period of war in Europe is over. A period of peaceful development began.

With the victory of you, my dear compatriots and compatriots!"

On May 15, 1945, Igor Levitan announced the last report of the Sovinformburo: "The reception of captured German soldiers and officers on all fronts is over."

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